



Metaphysics, Morality and Malevolence

**An investigation into the philosophical outlook inherent in the
treatment of the myths in Ovid's *Metamorphoses***

Callum Hyland (B.A., Hons)

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Tasmania

August, 2016

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Introduction

For two millennia, the mythological tales contained in the *Metamorphoses* of Publius Ovidius Naso have been among the most widely read and influential of all classical works, but very little is known of the author himself: his character, his views, or his philosophical convictions. Moreover, most of the information which has been transmitted to us comes from explicit autobiographical references in his own works.¹ Beyond the few biographical details of which there is no cause to doubt – such as Ovid's date of birth, the age difference between him and his brother, or the number of his grandchildren – most of the references, as Holzberg (2006) astutely pointed out, are more than a little dubious, given that nearly all can be shown to primarily serve significant literary purposes (particularly those found in *Tristia* 4.10). On the whole, this undermines the likelihood of the factual accuracy of such references and, therefore, the deductions drawn from them.² As a consequence, we have really very little to go on if we are to use what we know about the author as a guide to finding out why his works are as they are.

General aims

In light of this, we come to the problem of how better to understand the vast array of different and seemingly often conflicting issues found within Ovid's most popular work, the *Metamorphoses*, when we only have the poem itself in which to look for answers.

Investigation into this topic is not new, but is far from being exhausted, and has not yet yielded particularly satisfactory answers. Some decades ago, Charles Segal (1969a), in the introduction to his work on understanding the *Metamorphoses* through Ovid's use of landscape within the poem, alluded to one of the poem's key interpretational issues – that of the sense-of-life (the underlying implicit estimate of, attitude towards and feeling about

¹ See White (2002), pp.1-25; Ziolkowski (2004), pp.19-24, who gives a good biography of Ovid's life (mostly based on material found within Ovid's works) and his reception in his own time and in the early A.D. years; and Frazer (1931), pp.xi-xxi, who gives an admirably detailed and yet concise summation of Ovid's explicit autobiographical references and of what can be deduced from them.

² See also Holzberg (2002), particularly pp.21, 45, and 176-98.

existence)³ implied within it:

...for all its levity, the *Metamorphoses* has a grim and sombre side. Penetrating beneath Ovid's fluent grace of language and versification, his charm of narrative, his wit and abundance of invention, his apt turning of rhetorical *topoi*, one finds a poem pervaded by violence, cruelty, and arbitrary suffering. How are we to evaluate these elements and what sort of "Weltanschauung" is implied in this polarity of urbanity and violence? These questions have not received sufficient attention. (p.1)

With the problem of understanding the *Metamorphoses* in mind, my aim in this study is to identify and explain, through an investigation into Ovid's manner of story-telling within the poem, what kind of philosophical outlook on life (view of the universe and the individual's relation to it) is inherent in the text, and consequently what kind of sense-of-life this outlook is the progenitor of and expresses. To tackle this topic I am examining the views found within the poem in relation to three of the main branches of philosophy: metaphysics, epistemology and ethics – areas which, together, broadly encompass nearly every branch of philosophy, and allow for a holistic view of the works' implicit philosophical outlook.⁴ For the purpose of this investigation, I use the term *metaphysics* (which generally comes under the heading of epistemology – and indeed we will see presently that in this poem, characters' ideas about metaphysics are tied to what they consider to be the sources of knowledge) to apply specifically to the branch of philosophy covering the nature of existence, of reality, the world, oneself, and one's relationship to the universe (and the different forces active within it); *epistemology* to apply to the realm of knowledge, specifically, how it is acquired and certified – the status of concepts; and *ethics* to cover the realm of morality – the code of moral values by which one makes one's choices in word and action.⁵ A summary of the results of this investigation, and an explanation of the sense-of-life associated with them, is given on pp.27-8.

³ For easy reference, a list of definitions of key terms can be found in the *Glossary* (see pp.36-8).

⁴ I must regrettably exclude politics – the foundations on which social and political systems are based – from this study, with the hope of returning to it at a later date. To cover the topic properly would require looking at a completely new set of stories, since those which are most fruitful for gleaning an insight into the work's politics (whether explicit or implicit) are few and far between and are generally different from those which are most informative in the realms of metaphysics, epistemology and ethics.

⁵ Given that, as we will see, a particular set of morals and values are associated with each distinct type of epistemological approach presented within the poem, I have referred to the two jointly as "epistemology and ethics" throughout this thesis.

Motivations

My initial inspiration for this study came from purely selfish motives. From my earliest acquaintances with this monumental poet, the overall feeling I derived from reading his works was a distinctly negative one. However, admiring Ovid as a poet and storyteller, and particularly the *Metamorphoses*, I was never able to pinpoint the cause of such a negative impression. An observation of negativity itself within the poem is far from unique, and it has often been noted that the majority of the *Metamorphoses*' stories end in misery, and that the stories as a whole give off a tragic feeling. Glenn (1986) repeatedly observes that through this consistent presentation of tragedy, Ovid is showing that "There is no perfect joy" (p.100), i.e. no joy unmarred. This sentiment is confirmed explicitly in a number of Ovid's stories, such as that of *Minos & Aeacus*, in which we are told by the narrator that "truly never is there pure pleasure, and always some trouble comes upon happiness"⁶ "*usque adeo nulla est sincera voluptas,/ sollicitumque aliquid laetis intervenit*" (7.453-4).⁷ However, explaining my negative impression through factors so superficial as tragedy and imperfection within the poem never seemed enough. I was looking for a deeper source for my seemingly blind and unspecific reactions, and wanted to understand the reason for my response, and to determine whether it was something implicit – rather than explicit – in the author's works with which I fundamentally disagreed. Having been unable to find a satisfactory explanation that, even among the already formidable and ever increasing range of secondary literature on Ovid,

⁶ All translations in this thesis are my own unless otherwise specified. The text I use is that of Tarrant (*O.C.T.* 2004) unless otherwise specified, although I have occasionally taken the liberty of adding "!" and "?" marks to make sense of excerpts quoted.

⁷ Similarly, in that of *Actaeon* (3.131-252), we are told at one point that Cadmus, although seeming happy ("*felix*," 3.132) in exile – with Venus and Mars for parents in law "but of course the final days of a man should be looked for, and no one ought to be called happy before dead and the final funeral rites" "*sed scilicet ultima semper/ exspectanda dies homini, dicique beatus/ ante obitum nemo supremaque funera debet*," (3.135-7), a sentiment already common on account of its use in ancient tragedy: e.g. Aes. *Ag.* 928-9; Soph. *Oed.* 1528-30; Eurip. *Troiad.* 510; but perhaps most famous from Herodotus, who attributes the sentiment to Solon, in dialogue with Croesus (1.32.25-8). Again this is a sentiment that seems to be true almost universally for Ovid's stories. Indeed, the world Ovid portrays is a brutal one, and contains much tragedy and suffering. See also Fränkel (1956), who makes the rather pessimistic comment that "With a peculiar but attractive mixture of the grotesque and the pathetic, Ovid's transformation stories often evoke such minor tragedies of inadequacy, inhibition, and frustration as may visit us in our own lives" (p.80); and Tissol (1997), who states that "As we read the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid invites us to regard everyday phenomena symbolically in the light of the work's aetiological preoccupations, and see behind the outward face of nature an origin in human suffering and passion" (p.193), and again, summing up the Ovidian version of Vergil's Sybil episodes (Book 6 of the *Aeneid*) implies the same in saying "... Ovid's thematic suggestions: that Vergil's story is not the whole story, that arbitrary power and unintelligible suffering are more deeply embedded in the nature of things than are providential order and the working out of beneficent fate" (p.186). More generally on this topic, see Segal (1969a).

For ease, references given in these footnotes to examples of matters discussed which are found in other of the *Metamorphoses*' stories have been underlined and italicised.

might offer some identification of the sources of and justification for such negative feelings, I set out to see if I could discover more, specifically, to discover the kind of philosophical outlook inherent within the *Metamorphoses* and, as a consequence, the kind of sense-of-life that comes through from the poem's stories and the way in which they are told.

Scholarly context

Although the existing scholarship on Ovid is indeed vast, the investigation into the philosophical essence of the *Metamorphoses* – the meaning of the abstract sum of its content⁸ – is a largely neglected area. It is usually other aspects of the poem that are studied. For example, lengthy and extremely detailed investigations have been undertaken into issues such as the question of structure and unity within the poem.⁹ Such studies generally attempt to make sense of the poem by examining the relationship between its stories, identifying the links between them, and finding logic and method in the sequence in which they are presented, and to determine the integrating factors of the poem. For example, Otis (1970), regarding the problems of the poem, queries “Why the metamorphosis theme at all? Or, conversely, why the concern with narrative continuity? And what ... is the point of its arrangement – its strange concatenation of episodes linked by the most superficial, not to say absurd, devices? ... The purpose of this book ... is not just to answer them but to look for the shape and meaning of the whole poem – its principle of unity” (p.3).¹⁰ The results of such examinations usually lead to discussions on the issues of why the poem may have been written as it is, and what theme, meaning, or point the author may have been trying to convey

⁸ When I use the term *abstract*, I mean a concept of something which, through mental focus, can be isolated and separated from the context within which and the means by which it is presented.

⁹ General and comprehensive works which cover many of these areas including structure and unity, are those of Wilkinson (1955), pp.144-240; Otis (1966, 1970); Fränkel (1956); Wheeler (2000); Due (1974); Tissol (1997); and Solodow (1988), who, like Galinsky (1975), focuses on evidence for the poem's lack of unity. Of a more specific nature, dealing with structure (and without listing those who deal specifically with the question of unity via Augustan or Pythagorean themes), I refer the reader to: Glenn (1986), who deals with most of the aspects listed above in order to go into what he believes are the explicit themes of the *Metamorphoses'* stories and their relation to one another, and proceeds to sum up an overall meaning and thematic trends therefrom; Mack (1988), pp.109-117, who claims that there is no obvious unity within the poem, and much deliberate breaking of seeming unity; Coleman (1971), pp. 461-77; Rosati (2002), pp.271-304; Roberts, Dunn, & Fowler (1997); Crump (1931), pp.195-216; and Wilkinson (1958) pp.231-44. Also, see Newlands (2005), p.480, and Wheeler (2000), for a good overview of the history of the various approaches to the topic of unity taken by recent scholarship.

¹⁰ Otis' work comes in two editions, that of 1966, and that of 1970. The differences between editions are confined to their introductions and conclusions, and all references to pages numbered 305 or less in the 1970 edition, and not given in roman numerals, are also applicable to the edition of 1966.

(either explicitly or implicitly) by means of the poem¹¹ (see for example Solodow, 1988, pp.203-31, who sees in the poem an implicit treatise on art), or why it is and has seemingly always been popular (e.g. Due, 1974, pp.158-65, and the stated aims of Fränkel, 1956, pp.1-4). However, while these studies are extremely useful in answering the questions they set out to answer, they generally do not, as I do, provide a detailed statement of or explanation for the poem's sense-of-life, nor provide a detailed account of the philosophical outlook inherent in the poem that allows the themes that appear in it (political or otherwise) to exist. They are, therefore, inadequate in providing a full explanation of the problems that my study is intended to tackle.

Another aspect of the poem which has gained considerable scholarly attention is its political aspects. Studies on this topic are usually divided into three distinct camps relating, as Holzberg (2002) put it, to: "three diverging interpretations of Ovid's attitude toward the emperor... Some hold that he [Ovid] was one of the sovereign's partisans, that is, pro-Augustan" – those who see the politics in the poem as explicit pro-Augustanism (this includes the idea that the poem is unified overall by an Augustan theme);¹² "others consider him a critic of the regime, or, in other words, anti-Augustan" – those who believe that the politics in the poem are in fact anti-Augustan, that is, the Augustan ideas presented are deliberately – although implicitly – undercut, ridiculed, subverted and/or criticized (the view which has attracted most credence and attention in the last few decades);¹³ "the third party plumps for a compromise, arguing that Ovid took no interest in politics and must consequently be regarded as 'un-Augustan'" (p.7) – those who believe that these sections,

¹¹ I discuss "theme" in detail presently, but for the moment I define it as the *explicit* message/meaning of the text as given by the events of a given story – the sum of the abstract meaning of the story's events (which concretise it). The events of any story in which the theme, plot events and the manner of their presentation are linked and non-contradictory, add up to something, although it does not have to be a philosophical moral/message. This is the *theme*.

¹² I include within this category the studies of: Newlands (2005), pp.476-91; Hardie (1993); Ludwig (1965); Fränkel (1956); Döpp (1992), pp.129-30; and Otis (1966), "From the standpoint of the movement of ideas the arrangement has an obvious Augustan purpose... Undoubtedly Ovid assigned the strategic places to these episodes because they are the main carriers of his Augustan plot," (p.307). Although it should be noted that even before revising his views thoroughly in his 2nd edition, Otis observed that the material that could be taken as explicitly pro-Augustan fitted badly with the rest of the poem. The poem's essential fault, he says "lies not in the total plan *per se* but in the inconsistency of its comic and amatory core with the Augustan and heroic-epic themes Ovid tried so vainly to graft on to it" (p.337), i.e. the vast difference between the explicitly politically Augustan themes and the implicitly anti-Augustan ones.

¹³ Proponents of such a view include: Galinsky (1967), pp.181-91; Segal (1969b), pp.257-92; Coleman (1971), pp.461-77; Glenn (1986); Moulton (1973); pp.4-7; Little (1972), pp.389-401; and Johnson (1970), pp.123-51. Tissol (1997 and 2002), sits on the fence, stating, with regard to the Augustan elements of the text and their integration into the rest of the work: "My own view is that it is intentionally incoherent, presenting the reader with irreconcilable interpretive options."

whether they are seemingly pro- or anti-Augustan, are neither included for reasons of support or denial of a certain political ideology, nor do they underpin, unify, or act as a logical conclusion to the rest of the poem.¹⁴ These studies delve more specifically into the *ideas* presented within the poem as a whole, but they are really too specific to answer the questions posed at the start of my study. They deal almost exclusively with political ideas and the morals and values explicitly associated (or disassociated) with such politics, and rarely take account of the poem's implicit views on issues related to metaphysics, epistemology and ethics. They focus more on the similarities or differences the poem has to that which we know to be (or is generally taken to be) Augustan philosophy, rather than the broader philosophical base implied. I would like at this point to stress that the philosophical ideas found within the poem, around which this study is based are, as we will see presently, primarily *implicit* (with the obvious exceptions of the creation story in Book 1 and that of Pythagoras in Book 15) – implied by the characters, their actions, their positive or negative representations, and their resultant fates. As far as I can tell, nowhere is it shown that deep philosophical meaning was consciously the intention behind Ovid telling his stories the way he did.¹⁵

¹⁴ For this view, see: Due (1974), pp.66-89, who takes the Anti-Augustan view of the poem, but claims this not to be a unifying factor in the poem, but rather a by-product of other things Ovid was doing; Otis (1970), who now, in contrast to his earlier edition, sees the Augustan poem's parts as a deliberate mockery or parody of pro-Augustan messages, but not to be taken as integral to the poem (see pp.vii-ix), stating that "It seems, on the face of it, unlikely that Ovid would have consciously written an anti-Augustan poem, a mock-epic with a mock-Augustan ending. But I quite fail to see how we can otherwise interpret a large part of the *Metamorphoses*. Ovid was not naïve: he knew what he was doing. There is certainly an occasional pretence of seriousness, an avoidance of overt *lèse majesté*. But the heroic and the Augustan elements are nonetheless 'undercut'" (p.351); Galinsky (1975); and Holzberg (2002). Similarly, see Wheeler (2000), p.138, n.138, who gives the following list of those scholars who hold that "the Augustan propaganda, whether it is parodied or not, is extraneous to the poem," "Otis (1970) 304: 'The fact is that despite the evident Augustanism of the concluding section (Books XII-XV) – the movement from Troy to Rome, the successive apotheoses, the preparatory philosophy, the Helenus prophecy and the finale – its plan is really a quite external one which develops a motif that was peripheral rather than central to the preceding sections.' Little (1972b) 399: 'The Augustan passages of Bk. 15 are dedicatory in intent, and, as dedications, stand outside the course of the narrative. They are expressions of loyalty which are practically judicious, but artistically irrelevant.' Galinsky (1975) 253: 'The eulogy of Augustus and the account of Julius Caesar's apotheosis are not the organic end of a persistent thematic development' etc." See also Bömer (1969-86), on 15.1, 871-2, 877-8 for a list of further scholarship on the pro/anti-Augustanism issue. On Bömer himself, Tissol (1997), pp.190-1, gives a good evaluation: "Bömer provides a list of critical works that question the sincerity or success of Augustan elements in Book 15 and dismisses them all with the remark, 'Here the observation is worth making, with a view to the modern problem of "non-Augustanism," that Ovid employs the official terminology in an entirely loyal fashion.' [Bömer 250, on *Met.* 15.1] Though many of these works could fairly be accused of conceptual crudity, Bömer's answer is more misleading: he treats the Augustan passages as if they were isolated fragments, without a context to affect interpretation of their 'official terminology.'"

¹⁵ This is a contrary view to that upheld by many of the scholars who investigate the integration of the poem's explicitly philosophical sections with the rest of the poem (see below notes), but is supported by others who

Study into the poem's explicit philosophy, usually focussed on the Pythagoras section in Book 15, and the various elements of Pythagorean and other philosophies present in the Creation story in Book 1, follows a similar tripartite approach. For instance, some scholars argue for unity via the explicitly philosophical (primarily Pythagorean) aspects of the poem, for example, Stephens (1957), who concludes that both Pythagoras' speech, and to some extent the philosophy of the Creation section in Book 1 (which, he observes, contain significant Stoic and Orphic elements), are a mishmash of various philosophical ideas, and sees these ideas as integrated throughout the work and thus reflective of the philosophy Ovid holds himself (pp.62-77).¹⁶ Other scholars argue that Pythagoras and the aspects of Pythagoreanism are there basically to be undercut, a point summed up by Solodow (1988), "Pythagoras' speech tends towards a kind of playful exaggeration which undercuts solemn interpretation... Pythagoras' entire discourse... while purporting to espouse a serious philosophy of change in the universe, turns it upside down and makes it into an extended joke" (pp.166-7).¹⁷ Following on from this, others again argue that Pythagoras is not integral to the poem and is in fact there for other reasons. As Due (1974) remarks "... when Ovid starts with a 'philosophical' account of the creation and towards the end of his poem brings in the long speech of Pythagoras, this is probably due to artistic aims rather than philosophical intentions ... neither Ovid himself nor, what is more important, his readers would have regarded the philosophical passages in the *Metamorphoses* as anything but poetry" (p.30).¹⁸

hold that Ovid was not being consciously and deliberately philosophical in the general telling of his stories. For example: Galinsky (1975), states blankly that "Ovid was not a philosopher. He did not resort to the consolation of philosophy in his exile nor did he have any inclination to philosophize in the *Metamorphoses*" (p.48); Lafaye (1904), that "n'avait pas l'esprit philosophique" (p.191); Solodow (1988), that "no poet can be imagined to whom philosophy was more uncongenial than to Ovid" (p.215); and Fränkel (1956), who asserted that "Ovid, for one, had no command of abstract thought and in fact only dimly understood, himself, what he was doing" (p.73).

¹⁶ Others who argue for unity via Pythagorean aspects of the poem include: Stephens (1957), pp.62-77; Colavito (1989); and More (1974).

¹⁷ Examples of such arguments – that Pythagoras and the aspects of Pythagoreanism are there basically to be undercut – can be found in: Solodow (1988), pp.142-3, who posits that "The fifteen-line sentence in which he is introduced tells us much, I would argue, about Ovid's own attitude toward him... He does not take Pythagoras seriously enough to distinguish between his origins, his scientific and theological study, and his precepts... After this introduction it should be no surprise to find that the speech itself is a comic grab bag of soapbox philosophy – vehement and impassioned, in the manner of good didactic poetry, but signifying little. It swarms with bits and pieces of the philosophies that had attracted ancient thinkers, including all the more ridiculous aspects of Pythagoreanism while omitting all the most important tenets of the school"; Segal (1969b), pp.281-2; Glenn (1986); and Saint-Denis (1940), p.124.

¹⁸ Those who argue that Pythagoras is not integral to the poem, and is in fact there for other reasons, include: Due (1974); Myers (1994), pp.133-66, who in effect sums up the presentation of Pythagoras and Pythagoreanism as so convoluted that it cannot be taken as either a true representation of Pythagoras and Pythagoreanism, or be used to uphold or undermine the *Metamorphoses'* transformations; Little (1970), pp.340-60; and Holzberg (2002), pp.145-6; and to some extent Fränkel (1956), pp.108-10, who, while taking

Forays into this area of study are usually focused on the explicit philosophical statement within the text – as opposed to what is implicit in the characters, their actions, and the resulting themes, which is the focus of this paper – or the specifically Pythagorean/non-Pythagorean aspects of the poem compared to known philosophical types present in antiquity. These studies lack the inductive approach that I propose – starting with specific evidence (observable individual facts), and integrating them into generalisations – resulting in conclusions that are usually somewhat patchy. They do not, as I do, cover the realms of ethics or metaphysics in depth, or explain how the views present in such fields allow and underpin the themes that stem from the characters, their actions, and their resulting fates within the stories, or the implicit sense-of-life that results therefrom. Since this thesis focuses on key aspects of narratology (characterisation, plot, and the meanings implicit in the results of key actions), and the focus of the story of Pythagoras is far removed from these, both he and his explicit philosophical treatise will remain outside the scope of this paper. However, this thesis will demonstrate various methodological techniques that enable the comparison of the explicit philosophical ideas expounded by the Pythagoras figure to those found implicitly within the text.

Another popular area of investigation is Ovid's use of humour and wit, and the poem's overall seriousness or lack thereof. This area is potentially revealing with regard to specific aspects of the poem's philosophical outlook – particularly values and therefore ethics. Humour can be described as a tool of negation, and so what one considers humorous, what one considers funny and laughs at, reflects one's values by contradiction.¹⁹ Put simply, humour confirms one's values by what it laughs at. Thus by identifying the views implicit within the poem on gods and man, and that which is serious or tragic, heroic or elegiac, the values present in the work – the range of which stems from the work's philosophical outlook, particularly the views in the fields of metaphysics and ethics – can be identified. This helps explain why Ovid often undercuts such things humorously and in the manner that he does.

the Pythagorean elements in the work as serious on Ovid's part, does not hold that they underpin the philosophical outlook of the remainder of the work. See also Barchiesi (2006), pp.274-319, and Wheeler (2000), pp.114-27, who discuss the "objections" which have been raised "against the old claim that Pythagoras provides a philosophical basis for the *Metamorphoses*. First, the philosophical content of the speech of Pythagoras is either inconsistent or superficially connected with metamorphosis. Second, Ovid is less interested in philosophy than he is in literary and rhetorical display. Third, there is an undercurrent of parody in the didactic representation of Pythagoras (especially his moralizing about vegetarianism) that undermines his reliability."

¹⁹ Throughout the course of this thesis, when I use the term "value" I simply mean anything that is important enough for a character to exert effort to achieve, acquire or keep, be it physically tangible or not.

However, despite the potential, investigation into this field rarely delves deeply into the philosophical outlook that allows this kind of humour to exist, or identifies what it means to the sense-of-life implied by the poem as a whole.²⁰

The aforementioned are large scale studies, and yet there is a mass of Ovidian scholarship of less breadth on topics such as: literary allusions within the poem, which can help understand the aspects of stories on which Ovid means to focus, and the hidden meanings they might have (as for example, the allusions to Merops in the *Phaethon* story do in reminding the reader of the plot of Euripides' *Phaethon* – something I discuss presently);²¹ and various other aspects of poetics (such as narrative and technical style, including verbal effects and wordplay, transitions between stories, craftsmanship, rhetoric, use of genre, ring-structure and layered narrative) which, as we will see, can also aid us in getting a clear idea of what is being presented in each story.²² All of these may aid investigation into the issues I propose to examine. However, these are too specific to provide a thorough discussion on the issues of sense-of-life and overall philosophical outlook implied within the poem. Consequently, I have had to look to other aspects of the *Metamorphoses* and use a different kind of methodological approach for answers.

Nevertheless, there is a long history of scholarship – apart from that focused on the poem's explicitly philosophical aspects mentioned above – that attempts, through various means, to

²⁰ On comedy and humour within the *Metamorphoses*, see generally: Wilkinson (1955), pp.160-9; Otis (1970), pp.91-126; Fränkel (1956), p.215, n.42; Solodow (1988), pp.101-9; Frécaut (1972); Galinsky (1975) pp.110-53; and more generally, Ahl (1985), who has particularly good sections on Ovid's use of verbal puns; Tissol (1997); Glenn (1986); Segal (1969a); Holzberg (2002); Wheeler (2000); Brown (2005); and Due (1974). On the humorous undercutting of the gods, the heroic and epic in general, see: Coleman (1971), pp. 461-77; Segal (1969b), pp.269-70; Mack (1988), particularly pp.119-34; Fyler (1971), pp.197-8; Newlands (2005), pp.481-5; Holzberg (2002), particularly pp.2-4, 131, 140-2; and Jouteur (2009). On Ovid's tendency to spoil the drama, pathos and continuity of a story or sequences of stories through humorous means – as well as unnecessary digressions and inclusion of the grotesque and superfluous, see: Solodow (1988), particularly pp.118-9; Tissol (1997); and more generally Albrecht (1999); and Curley (2009).

²¹ See Albrecht (1999), pp.143-207; Solodow (1988), pp.227-8; Galinsky (1975), pp.185-93; Hinds (1987), pp.17-22; (1998), pp.1-16; Mack (1988), pp.135-42; Burrow (1999), pp.271-3; Conte (1986), pp.57-63; Miller (1993), pp.153-64; and more generally, Tissol (1997).

²² Each of these aspects has had a wealth of scholarship devoted to it, relating to most or all of the *Metamorphoses'* stories; a complete list of which is too large to include here. I would however select Galinsky (1975), pp.193-7 for his insights into wordplay; Albrecht (1999), pp.143-207, particularly 166-70 for similes, and 200-2 for tense usage; and for authors who examine the purpose of specific details included in or between each story, Schmidt (1938); and more broadly, Otis (1970); for rhetoric and other literary tactics, see Wilkinson (1955), pp.160-9; and Otis (1970), pp.226-37, who, during the course of his book discusses most of the technical aspects most commonly studied. The same can be said for Tissol (1997); Ahl (1985); and the comprehensive works of Solodow (1988); Holzberg (2002); Due (1974); Wheeler (2000); and Fränkel (1956). More generally, see Barchiesi (2006), pp.274-319; Schmidt (1991); Segal (1971), pp.331-7; and Gildenhard & Zissos (1999), pp.164-70.

discover the poem's overall abstract thematic or philosophical meaning. However, not all are of equal merit. Some, when they venture to discuss specifically philosophical issues, tend to begin with some preconceived idea about the poem's philosophy and try to prove that this idea is correct, or try and find evidence to make the poem's philosophy like their own.²³ Others have a tendency to take the morality and philosophy implied by individual stories as reflective of Ovid himself, without considering the context in which a story is told/placed within the *Metamorphoses* or whether it is applicable to, or consistent with, different kinds of stories from other parts of the poem. This kind of approach is often used by the scholars mentioned above who take the explicit philosophical statements given in the text as being direct from and reflective of the author. This approach is not dissimilar in result from that of moralising Ovid's individual tales, which dates back to the Middle Ages.²⁴

Despite this, there have been studies that have made good preparatory inroads towards the discovery of the poem's implicit philosophical outlook by more objective means, and by some of the most eminent Ovidian scholars, such as Brooks Otis (1966, 1970), Hermann Fränkel (1956) and Charles Segal (1969a). Each warrants a brief overview.

Otis' whole work,²⁵ although not stated openly, is in effect based on the principle of finding Ovid's character through the choices he made in presenting his stories in the *Metamorphoses*. Among other things, Otis examines Ovid's sources and his deviation from them, observing that "all these procedures are dictated by the effect or point he wants to bring out in a special context" (p.89). However, as noted above, his investigations are related more to the poem's overall form and thematic issues in the context of the poem's structure as a whole, rather than examining the themes implicit in the results of specific actions by specific kinds of characters in certain contexts, and the philosophical basis upon which these individual themes rest, that is, the philosophical essence the poem conveys through Ovid's choice of what he presents how he presents it. As a consequence, he concludes in his 1st edition (1966) that the poem carries an intentionally pro-Augustan theme (p.307, quoted above, n.12), and that Ovid was merely unable to smoothly unify this explicit pro-Augustanism to the stories as his character naturally wanted to tell them – in an implicitly anti-Augustan vein. This explains, says Otis,

²³ See Rand (1925), who gives a good although brief summary of Ovid's various positions as a man of ethics, theology, magic, throughout the ages. See also: Ziolkowski (2004), pp.24-9, (who further observes that even now, Ovid is being read in such atypical ways as being against "ecological carelessness," p.179); Martindale (1988); Anderson (1995a); and Wilkinson (1955), particularly Chapters 11 and 12, pp.366-438.

²⁴ See Rand (1925), pp.131ff; Munari (1960); and Hexter (2002).

²⁵ Both the first edition (1966), and the second (1970).

why Ovid's poem "is thus a combination of true comedy, real pathos and false heroics, of intentional and unintentional humour, of conscious and unconscious grotesquerie, of brilliant design and disastrous mistake." In his 2nd edition (1970) – which is in effect the same study with a new conclusion – he revises his views to reflect his new-found belief that the seemingly Augustan elements are in fact subtly undercut through comedy and parody. More significantly, in observing the differences between the poem's heroic/ Augustan aspects and the more human/ amatory ones, he concludes that there is "an essential opposition of style, content and purpose" (p.354) within the poem that "is deliberate and quite intentionally Ovidian" (p.372). I agree with Otis that the seeming inconsistencies and contradictions found within Ovid's poem are in fact consistent expressions of a particular sense-of-life and underpinning philosophical outlook, and moreover hold that this is evidenced in the ethical, epistemological, and metaphysical ideas inherent in the poem's stories and the way in which they are told. However, Otis' findings with regard to the kind of outlook that is expressed within the poem, and the sort of sense-of-life that comes through as a result, are vastly different to mine – a consequence of the different foci of our studies. The primary difference is that his investigations are on a broader scale, but in less depth, and so, despite producing many valid results, lack the methodological equipment necessary to start from the smallest details and work up through a logical chain of evidence to broad generalisations.

Fränkel states explicitly from the outset (p.4) that one of his aims is to draw an outline of Ovid's biography from his works. Not only does he do this, but among a plethora of acute observations, proceeds to draw a number of conclusions about what kind of sense-of-life results from Ovid's choices of what to write and how he presented his stories. However, among his many conclusions are a number that are far from those I draw from this study, as will become apparent. For example, he concludes that: the contents of the poem show that Ovid was "good-natured, responsive, and kindly... was both worldly-wise and playful" and his "sensitive heart went out with brotherly charity to all creatures, first to the men or those who were like men, but then also to animals, and sometimes even to plants" (p.90); and that Ovid was both seriously pro-Augustan and was significantly influenced by Pythagorean teachings – although acknowledging that these were not sufficiently ingrained to philosophically underpin the whole work (pp.101-11). Fränkel's investigations are in some ways similar to those of Otis, although on a smaller scale and, unfortunately for my purposes, he deals mainly with isolated details, scattered throughout the poem's stories, as opposed to in-depth examinations of one or a series of stories. Also, it does not appear that Fränkel

appreciates the broader implications of such investigations, or that this approach could be applied to each of the *Metamorphoses*' stories and indeed the work as a whole. In summary, the investigation into implicit philosophical issues stemming from Ovid's manner of presenting character, plot and theme within the myths themselves was not of primary concern for either Fränkel or Otis, and neither attempted to go through any part of the *Metamorphoses* in as systematic a manner or to the level of detail that such analysis ultimately requires.

Segal, as noted earlier, clearly recognised the significance of the issue I am investigating, although he chose to look elsewhere for answers, for example, in Ovid's depiction and use of landscapes and the symbolism attached to them. In his final chapter, entitled "*Metamorphosis and the Moral Order: Ovid's view of nature*," Segal draws the conclusion that the moral view expressed in what Ovid depicts and how he depicts it is to some extent one of "chaos, of purposeless change, movement without meaning or end" (p.92), but also of consistency and fluidity. He attributes this broad-scale contradiction to the fact that Ovid was unable to reconcile "the upward direction which ...[he] seems to want to give his material through the 'historical' and 'philosophical' sections of his poem" (p.92) with the "sense of helplessness and vulnerability of the individual in the vast Roman *imperium*" (p.93), which he himself had subconsciously taken on board. As will become clear later, Segal's statements of what we see happening in Ovid's poem share many similarities with my own findings, but it is my belief that Ovid's failure to create coherence and consistency across the board is far more intentional on Ovid's part than Segal would have us believe. My study also differs in that where Segal brings his observations to broad conclusions about Ovid's general outlook, I make specific assertions on the various branches of the philosophical outlook implied within the poem, namely metaphysics, epistemology and ethics.

As a whole, the significance and implications of the investigation into the poem's overall philosophical outlook on life – understanding the world view that is inherent in the poem, allowing it to exist in the form that it does and contain the themes found within it – seems to be generally under-appreciated. Furthermore, none of the above Ovidian scholars (nor to my knowledge any other) have separated their discoveries regarding Ovid's philosophical outlook into different categories (such as metaphysics, ethics, and epistemology) and shown exactly which aspects of Ovid's story telling (either stylistic, narrative or thematic) shed light on which aspects of the poem's inherent philosophical outlook, nor used these to explain what kind of sense-of-life the poem as a whole engenders. My study achieves this, and the

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particular kind of rigorous philosophy-from-artistry aspects of my methodology, applied to specific sections of the *Metamorphoses*' text, allows for new, more complete, and more consistent answers to the problems stated above than have previously been offered.

This thesis

With regard to my own study, in trying to understand the sense-of-life that is present in Ovid's works, and the philosophical outlook inherent in his works on which it is based, I have chosen to examine the largest of Ovid's works, the *Metamorphoses*, and to do so using a new methodological approach, the basic theory of which is as follows.

By looking at a story's central conflict, the essential characters and actions (those necessary to enact such conflicts) can be identified, as can the issue over which they come into conflict.²⁶ Then, by identifying the characters' motivations for their actions, as well as what happens to the central conflict and why, the story's explicit abstract themes can be found. These in turn provide information about certain aspects of the work's philosophical outlook, which are made necessary by the existence of such themes.²⁷ By examining a variety of stories in this manner, specifically those that have themes that shed light on different branches of philosophy (i.e. metaphysics, epistemology and ethics), we can reach a relatively detailed understanding of the outlook implicit in the work, and one that is consistent across the different areas of philosophy, specifically metaphysics and ethics. This naturally includes any inner inconsistencies that may be present in the work's outlook, including potential differences between what is stated explicitly (in a philosophical sense) and what is implicit in the characters, their actions, and ultimate outcomes.²⁸

It should be noted here that explicit philosophical statements given in the text, either by character or narrator, can also be used as evidence for a broader abstract philosophy *if* (and only if) they are integrated into the text. That is, if they are supported by concrete examples

²⁶ By "essential," I mean fundamental, those details (whether of character, plot, action) upon which the rest depend, and without which would be impossible or become meaningless; those which distinguish this story, character, action, from all others, and whose difference would make the most change in the essence of whatever is being depicted or, whose removal would entail a contradiction, that is, make the existence of the character, plot, theme etc. impossible.

²⁷ By "necessary" I mean any aspect of an outlook whose removal would entail a contradiction, that is, make the existence of the theme impossible.

²⁸ The individual steps of this methodology are discussed more fully at the end of my *Introduction*.

given in action that are consistent with the context and flow of the story, and neither contradicted in either the events or actions of the story, nor the way in which it is told. If such sections are not totally integrated, then this is an example of a contradiction to be addressed as explained below, and cannot be taken as conclusive evidence for it being part of the overall outlook inherent in the work.

While the above methodology is new in its application to Ovid, it is not entirely original. In developing it, I have been largely inspired by and adapted the methodologies used in two lecture courses, one entitled *Reason in Ancient Greek Drama* by Robert Mayhew (2001), and the other *Eight Great Plays as Literature and as Philosophy* by Leonard Peikoff (1993) – from whom Mayhew draws much of his own methodology. However, while I use a similar methodological approach to each of these scholars, the works to which they have applied theirs, and their respective aims, are significantly different. Mayhew’s aim is to identify and compare the role of reason (or lack thereof) in certain plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes; Peikoff’s is more general and more literary based, aimed at demonstrating how certain philosophical ideas held by various playwrights are expressed in the form and content of their dramas. Further, while the aims of both these scholars are not unrelated to my own, it is evident that both authors focus solely on an artistic medium dramatically different to that of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. As a consequence, the methodologies they use have been modified to suit the art form under study. In this respect, it is important to note that the vignette-like episodes of Ovid’s poem, which are here the focus, are of a far different scale to the sizeable and stand-alone works discussed by Mayhew and Peikoff. As a result, this study has called for a much more focused and elemental approach than those from which its methodology is derived.

Although I have primarily adapted my methodology from the above authors, my approach shares a number of similarities to those who use more well-known narratological approaches, although fundamentally differing on many points. Take for example the studies which approach narratological analysis from a structuralist perspective,²⁹ or which use methodologies derivative from such an approaches³⁰ – perhaps the most popular branches of

²⁹ Those who believe that a narrative “shares with other narratives a structure which can be analysed” and is not “simply a hotch potch of events” which “can only be discussed by relying on the art, the talent or the genius” of the author (Barthes, 1966). In this category can be placed many of the strictly Ovidian scholars listed in n.9 above, and whose proponents in the broader field of narratology in general include such studies as those of Barthes (1966), and Genette (1980).

³⁰ Such as Bal (1985).

narratological analysis in the last fifty years.³¹ While structuralists can, through the identification what is common to each narrative text and by application of a particular set of tools (tailored to the nature of narrative texts), make great steps towards consistently and systematically describing narrative texts within the same framework (see Bal, 1985, pp.3-10) – and it is likewise my aim to find understanding of certain aspects of the text under study through selecting and focussing on certain key aspects of the work – structuralist techniques are not sufficient for my study.

Such studies break narratives down into a variety of different elements, analyse their relationships to one another, and from this try to form a coherent and consistent interpretation of a narrative.³² In Ovidian scholarship, studies that fall into this category include the prominent works of scholars such as: Due (1974) and Wheeler (2000), whose approaches are specifically designed to seek narratological unity or try determine “how the poems’ different parts relate to the whole” (Wheeler, 2000, p.1) by observing similarities in aspects such as style, content, transitions, explicit subject focus, or thematic continuity, and relating them to one another; Hinds (1987), who attempts to show by a close reading of one episode of the *Metamorphoses*, and comparison of it to a comparable section of the *Fasti*, how every part and aspect of the poem is designed to have a bearing on its overall interpretation; and Holzberg (2002), who also has structuralist tendencies, examining characters and psychology, breaking the poem into sections, and looking at how they relate to one another.

Additionally, such studies tend towards finding layers of narrative – essentially different stories contained within the same text – depending on which aspects of the text the reader focuses on and interprets. For example, one narrative may be the story as the narrating voice clearly intends to present it, another, the story as the events and actions of the characters alone portray – irrespective of whether they are at one with the narrator’s words. Again the order of events taken only in the sequence of narration may constitute a different narrative

³¹ For general scholarship on the topic of narratology, see the seminal works of Genette (1980) and Bal (1985); as well as those of Barthes (1977); Forster (1927); Herman and Vervaeck (2005); Prince (1982); and Rand (2000).

³² Some of the most commonly identified and analysed elements of such approaches include (but are by no means limited to): events (actions and occurrences) and the varying circumstances in which they occur; actors (characters), their narratological types, importance, and kinds of relationship between them (and the various consequences of this); story (plot and development), and the voice, style and structure of its presentation – including the identity of the narrator and context in which they are relating their narrative (and what biases they may have); and the relationship in quality and quantity of the plot’s constituent parts.

than that presented by the actual chronological order of events.³³ This approach is perhaps best represented in Ovidian scholarship by Barchiesi (2002, 2006), who attempts to understand Ovid – or at least split different aspects of his work into different levels – by analysing: the various internal narrators of the *Metamorphoses*; the similarities and differences of them and their stories; their relationships between one other; the transitions between different narrators' stories; and the relationship between these narrators' stories and the overall narrating voice.

The insufficiency of this approach for my study is largely on account of the subjectivity of the varying structuralist scholars' approaches. Even when using the same techniques in principle, each reader or analyst may come to vastly different conclusions, because there is nothing to stop them from selecting different aspects of the text as important for study and regarding what they select as crucial for understanding the text. For example, as Bal (1985) admits of the application by others of her own methodology, "the textual description obtained with the aid of this theory can by no means be regarded as the only correct description possible. Another individual may perhaps use the same concepts differently, emphasise other aspects of the text, and, consequently, produce a different textual description" (p.4).

While I too focus on certain essentials, and integrate them to form a coherent and consistent whole, my approach has been specifically designed to be as little open to subjective interpretation as possible. Firstly, by selecting and focussing on only a few essentials of narrative, I avoid the difficulties caused by having too many variables to influence interpretation. In choosing which aspects to focus on, I have started with the basic elements of a story as set out by Aristotle and generally followed by the classical school,³⁴ and refined them, retaining only those elements which have been accepted throughout the ages by classicists, structuralists, and most moderns as essential to any story of sufficient length, being the basics and irremovable cornerstones of narrative. Thus, rather than focussing on sequences, patterns, relationships of parts and techniques to each other, (as, for example, structural narratologists such as Genette do), I deal predominantly with: choices and actions (required to link and move the events of the plot); characters (required to enact the actions); conflicts (obstacles, actual or implied, required to show the scale and authenticity of

³³ See Herman and Vervaeck (2005) for a good summary of the key points of the structuralist approach to narratology and its many variants and derivatives.

³⁴ See Aristotle's *Poetics*, from whence ultimately stems the identification of the essentials in a literary work.

characters' motivations and capabilities); their causes and results; and themes (explicit meaning of the situation, its results, and the reasons for them).³⁵

All other aspects, such as style, narrator, transitions, layered narration, I only include where necessary. Indeed, all of these are mentioned and discussed at some point during this thesis, when they make a difference to either the explicit theme or the implicit philosophical outlook this study is aimed at discovering. Similarly, many of the aspects of Ovid's narrative that interest other scholars using narratological approaches, I can omit from this study – unless of course they are relevant to the essentials – on account of the difference of our separate focuses. For instance, the information required for studies which try to understand Ovid's intentions through how a reader responds to a text; to find unity through the work's structural features; and to make sense of the poem by understanding the narrating voice and levels of narration; is clearly not identical to that required for my own study – the analysis of the treatment of the most fundamental elements of individual tales, the relationship of these elements to each other, and the discovery of unity in the philosophical ideas implied by these throughout a wide range of different story types.

The Aristotelean influence on my methodology, mentioned above, is also a factor in why I do not follow the layered approach to narrative, popular amongst structuralist and other post-classical schools. The classical, Aristotelean approach holds that there is really only one narrative in a text – the summation of what is contained within the text, explicit or implicit (irrespective of whether or not this reflects what is intended by the author), and that inconsistencies between voice, explicit and implicit statements, action and implication, and seeming contradictions found in the text, do not point to different layers of interpretation, rather, simply to one narrative, which may nevertheless be inherently contradictory. Thus my study differs from those of other Ovidian scholars such as Barchiesi (cited above), and Rosati (1983, 2002), who finally concludes, from his attempts to make sense of all these levels of narration, that the diversity and lack of consistency found between these separate narratives only blurs any common meaning or idea that may be discoverable from the poem as a whole (2002, pp.303-4). In essence, his conclusions imply that structuralist methods are useless to

³⁵ Additionally, in response to the subjective interpretation warned of by Bal, my methodology is such that each step must be adhered to sufficiently in order for the analyst to proceed with security to the final conclusions (from conflict, to plot-development, to characterisation, to theme, to overall outlook), and there is little to be gained in the long term from over interest in any step. Thus, by the application of this method to this story, as much as any other, each reader should be able to come to the same conclusions. See *Methodology in detail* below for more details.

analysis of the *Metamorphoses*, because one only ends up with insoluble contradictions as a result.

This view is in line with those narratological approaches of the post-classical and non-structuralist schools (such as Bakhtin, 1981), who recognise that the narrating voice and those of the characters carry a certain ideology, although dismiss the ultimate validity of the results of studies aimed at finding it. Their reasoning is that because the reader may recognise the explicit ideology imposed and reject it, and the author might anticipate this and deliberately change the style, structure, or contents of the text accordingly, “as a result, it becomes impossible to identify a clear and compelling relationship between narrative technique X and ideological meaning Y” (Herman and Vervaeck, 2005, p.122, paraphrasing Uspensky, 1973). With this I fundamentally disagree, although I acknowledge the difficulties inherent in the quest for such an ideology. The difficulty and danger of the issue is partly why I do not look directly at the author of the *Metamorphoses*, merely the text, my aim being to show that the text inherently carries a philosophical outlook, and that contradictions and inconsistencies found within it (whether or not conscious or intentional on the author’s part) can largely be identified and, if enough evidence is given – as is the case in most of the poem’s more problematic points – used to construct the philosophical nature of the work as a whole – even if this itself is inherently contradictory.

In the same vein, I do not attempt to go into the question of the relationship of the text’s inherent, implicit philosophical outlook to that of its author, partly because it is not what interests me, but more because it would require a philosophical and narratological treatise beyond the scope of this study to argue this topic in anything near sufficient detail or depth.

As a whole, the narratological approach used in this thesis is simply tailored to its aim, and as a consequence, one of its strengths is its simplicity. As it is focused on so few elements, found in one form or another in all of Ovid’s stories that are longer than a few lines, these elements, and what is expressed thematically by their treatment, can easily be compared and contrasted from story to story, as can the fundamental philosophical ideas they imply. Finally, this methodology is attractive because of its purely inductive approach, rigorously validated at each step. By starting with the main conflict, progressing to the characters and actions required to enact it, then to its results and the themes expressed by why these results occur, and so integrating these with each other, we may produce broader generalisations that

together offer a particularly thorough and defensible view of the overall philosophical outlook inherent in the work.

Of all Ovid's works, the *Metamorphoses* in particular lends itself to this study on account of its size, diversity of content, and variety in the presentation of its stories. Also, being the largest and most multifaceted of Ovid's works, and comprising an enormous variety of stories whose themes vary dramatically, it contains a whole philosophical outlook, as opposed to isolated principles and abstractions. This means that it cannot easily be summarised in a single explicit message or theme.

I should at this point reiterate that my primary aim is to determine the work's overall philosophical outlook and sense-of-life from the text of the poem, to identify what is inherent within it, and demonstrate how this is presented. Only when warranted do I deal with the issue of how the work may have been received in Ovid's time, or discuss the context in which Ovid lived, wrote and published his works, or the contemporary philosophical, literary, social, political, or other trends.

In seeking the poem's overall philosophical outlook by a process of induction, the ramifications of any inconsistencies or contradictions that arise regarding this outlook, if not identified and explained, have the potential to greatly affect our interpretation.³⁶ Firstly, some can be classified without hesitation as anomalies which reflect a lack of rigour in thought on Ovid's part. These include tenets expressed explicitly, but implicitly disregarded by the context as ineffectual and pointless,³⁷ and ideas inherited from tradition and presented as intrinsically valid, although in practice (whether consciously or not) remain disintegrated or even ignored. Such anomalies are usually easy to detect by simply considering whether they are necessary to the other major fundamentals concerned with the main branches of philosophy (metaphysics, epistemology, ethics) found in the work, that is, whether their removal would invalidate what remains. Nevertheless, depending on the frequency of their occurrence, and their importance to the context in which they appear, these anomalies may reflect fundamental differences between the ideas expressed explicitly and those presented implicitly, which are important in understanding the work's sense-of-life and overall outlook.

³⁶ Glenn (1986), in his conclusion (pp.207-26), sums up the great variety of explicit themes within the *Metamorphoses*, and observes their contradictions and inconsistencies, although he does little in trying to explain them philosophically.

³⁷ A significant example of this which crops up is the explicit promotion of both free-will and determinism as being at work in different stories, and sometimes even within the course of a single story.

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Other contradictions and inconsistencies, which seem to be consciously and deliberately included by the author, yet implicitly disagree with the majority of evidence found in the text, cannot be dismissed so easily.³⁸ Whatever the reasons for their inclusion (whether through fear of contemporary disapproval, or requests from friends), and whatever their purpose (for example, as tools for the promotion of some idea, e.g. a piece of political propaganda, a didactic lesson or, more generally, in order to make certain sentiments or beliefs appear – at least on the surface – to be held by the author), these can only be identified as contradictions and left labelled as such. Since they do not stem from and are not integrated into the rest of the work, all that can be said from the point of view of this study is that they suggest a contradiction in the author's own premises, either conscious or subconscious, which is reflected in the outlook inherent in his work.³⁹ Fortunately, as far as I can determine, such instances found in the *Metamorphoses* are limited to the realms of politics.⁴⁰ Since I am excluding politics from my study, these issues shall remain outside the scope of this thesis.

Choice of stories

The *Metamorphoses* is a poem of enormous variety. Apart from the fact that it is made up of elements of epic, elegy, tragedy and comedy,⁴¹ the stories found within it vary in length, complexity in the central conflict, and the amount of related conflicts and digressions/

³⁸ Such as, for example, the Augustan aspects of the work, which seem on the surface to be promoted and yet are implicitly undercut.

³⁹ Although the author in question is obviously of the male gender, and so deserving of the appellation "his", for ease and consistency I shall use the masculine "he" "his" "him" for the course of this thesis when referring to "an author" in general or "a character" of unidentified gender for the purposes of example; "his/her/its" or similar circumlocution I find too cumbersome. Likewise, I shall use "man" for "mankind in general" later on in this thesis.

⁴⁰ I do not count the Pythagoras section in Book 15 as being among these contradictions. Although philosophically and explicitly contradictory to that found implicitly elsewhere, it has been demonstrated that this passage is implicitly integrated into the rest of the text in a number of ways, and serves specific poetic purposes. See for example Due (1974), p.30, pp.162-3; Myers (1994), p.155; and Holzberg (2002), p.146.

⁴¹ Much has been written on the variety of subject matter and manner of presentation within the *Metamorphoses*. Without going into depth on the scholarship surrounding the question of unity within the poem, see Mack (1988), pp.109-11, who notes that every kind of style is found within the poem – epic, heroic, tragic, epistolary, pastoral, elegiac, hymnic etc. – and proceeds to illustrate its "varied subject matter – it has tales about love and hate, ... piety and impiety, ... divine vengeance, divine justice, ... divine malevolence. It has comedies, ... tragedies ... it covers the subject matter of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* as well as the *Aeneid*. It has scientific sections ... philosophical and historical sections... Greek mythology... Roman legend." (p.111); Due (1974), p.121, who notes "The extreme variety of subject-matter" contained within the poem; Otis (1970), p.279ff; Fyler (1971), p.197, who calls the work "a fifteen book exercise in mixed genre"; and Solodow (1988), pp.17-25, who observes and discusses in depth how the "poem is comprehensive in chronology, in subject matter, and in literary genres."

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subplots/ tangential stories. It contains characters with a range of statures, motivations, types and magnitudes of values, as well as possessing both virtuous and vicious tendencies. In addition, the stories vary with regard to theme, types of beings involved (mortals, immortals, or both), identity of narrator (one or more internal narrators, the supposedly Ovidian narrating voice), and their endings – tragic, positive, or a mixture. In conjunction with this, we find characters who demonstrate fundamentally different approaches to epistemology and ethics (those I define later as the subjective, mixed, and intrinsic approaches), and who have a variety of different attitudes to metaphysics as a result. These factors, along with the tragic, comic, mortal and immortal aspects of these stories – and the variety of abstract themes that their various results embody – are aspects which any study attempting to understand the sense-of-life implicit in the *Metamorphoses* and the philosophical outlook underpinning it has to cover.

I have had to be selective in my choices of parts of the *Metamorphoses* to examine, due to the sheer number of stories found within it and the significant amount of repetition in their themes and the manner of their presentation. However, even though I have settled on six stories, they are representative of all the above variations. As will be explained presently, each has been chosen not only for their length, sufficient to allow substantial study of characterisation, plot, and theme, but for their representation of a certain type of story within the *Metamorphoses*. Each sheds light on different aspects of the poem's metaphysics, epistemology or ethics: whether that is through a character's metaphysical makeup; the metaphysical makeup of the universe or the hierarchy of forces within it; characters' approaches to the topic of morality; or specific duties and values implied to be associated with each approach. As a consequence, what is found in each story examined can be applied to those that are thematically similar, and those with similarities in other respects, such as types of character, motivations, and endings.

Additionally, most of the selected stories include multiple conflicts (even if only in sub-plots) that stem from characters pursuing strong and opposite goals. These are more likely than others to shed light on a variety of branches of the work's overall outlook – although usually in unequal measure. Further, I have further tried to choose stories where the main *themes* are not necessarily obvious – as, for example, they are in the myths of Actaeon (3.131-252) (the capricious nature of the gods and fate) and Pentheus (3.511-733) (the power of the divine and the consequences of rejecting it). I have also tried to choose stories that, on the surface, seem

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to differ from and/or contain themes which are atypical from those most common in the *Metamorphoses*. Both stories told by the narrating voice and those told by an internal narrator are included in order to show that there is consistency among them regarding sense-of-life and philosophical outlook. As a whole, these stories provide multiple reference points that shed light on different aspects of the work, and ultimately present a complete, comprehensive and detailed picture of its overall philosophical outlook, and provide the basis from which to understand the sense-of-life it engenders.

The six stories analysed are treated individually, but can, as far as the broad trend of this thesis goes, be taken in pairs. In the first two (*Phaethon* and *Ceres, Dis & Proserpina*), most of the key aspects of the poem's inherent philosophical outlook are identified and discussed. These are by far the largest chapters, and those that cover the broader application of the identified aspects in the greatest depth. The ensuing two stories (*Scylla* and *Meleager*), while offering new information, are more significant in showing how the information found in the initial pair can be found in and applied to different types of stories with different types of characters and plots. The final pair (*Pyramus & Thisbe* and *Pygmalion*), while each still adding something new, show how the material found in the previous four stories is present in and consistent with that found in even the most atypical of the *Metamorphoses'* tales and characters.

The significant aspects of the stories covered in detail are as follows:

The story of *Phaethon* (1.747-2.400) is my starting point, partly as it is one of the earliest stories of significant scale in the *Metamorphoses*, and partly as its central conflict is so obvious. This story sheds light on all three realms of philosophy under examination: metaphysics, epistemology and ethics. It centres on a simple two-person conflict over a single relatively insignificant character's purely personal desires, and the wider resulting consequences of his actions. It is also one of the poem's longest stories and unique in that for its length it is basically unbroken. It contains no digressions, subplots, or tangential stories until its resolution. The story's main themes are presented as equally applicable to mortals and immortals, and tragedy strikes all the major characters.

The story of *Ceres, Dis & Proserpina* (5.337-660, incorporated in the story of *Minerva and the Muses*, 5.250-678) is very different. It is primarily revealing with regard to metaphysics, but also deals with epistemology and ethics. The conflict is much more complex than that of

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Phaethon in that there are four different parties essential to it and, although the focus is on the personal value of one character for another, the consequences of this conflict are in several ways world-scale. This is again one of the poem's longer tales, although the plot-development is more convoluted and harder to follow – there are a number of tangential stories, subplots, and digressions. It is also not presented by the narrating voice, but an internal narrator, whose story its themes reflect. This story is completely based on characters of divine stature, and the story's main theme is ultimately about the hierarchy of and interaction between the various powers in the universe. The ending is of a mixed nature, with both tragic and positive elements.

The story of *Scylla* (8.1-151), in contrast to the one above, is based solely around the choices and actions of mortals, and is significant to this study because of its revelations on ethical and epistemological issues. The conflict is once again quite simple; it is between two characters – one of stature, the other not – who come into conflict over a moral issue. Here, for the first time, we see a character attempting to achieve self-centred values by what is portrayed as consciously wicked means. In consequence, the theme is purely personal and moral. A comparatively short story, it is self-contained and uninterrupted. The characters' fates are not all tragic.

The *Meleager* tale (8.260-546) is, like that of *Scylla*, enlightening primarily in the realms of epistemology and ethics, but in a more varied way, in that it contains more obvious examples of characters with different kinds of approaches to morality. Once again we have a simple two-person conflict with severe personal consequences, but this time over a moral/epistemological issue. Thus the theme is also a moral one. A relatively long tale, it does not digress, and deals with mortals of great stature, although flawed. Tragedy is again ubiquitous.

Pyramus & Thisbe (4.55-166), of all the stories examined, offers the least new in our understanding of the poem's inherent philosophical outlook. It is included here largely as an example of how the ideas already discovered are found in and consistent with even the most seemingly atypical of its stories. Its type of central conflict differs again from those above, in that it focuses on two virtuous characters who passionately love each other, are pursuing the same values, and who come into conflict thereby. Otherwise, both characters stand out in their insignificance. The story is again told by an internal narrator, is relatively short, uninterrupted, and mortal based. The theme is in effect to do with morality, and the ending is unequivocally tragic.

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Pygmalion (10.243-97) is another seemingly atypical story, included here because of its apparent differences to the large majority of the *Metamorphoses*' stories. Interest in the *Pygmalion* story falls unquestionably in both the realms of metaphysics and ethics. Unique to this story is its one-person conflict, the internal conflict of a man who has impossible personal desires, or, to put it another way, one man against the very metaphysical makeup of nature. The main character is of ordinary stature and is presented in a generally positive light. The story is unbroken and relatively short, and is one of a series told by an internal narrator trying to qualify the morality of his own actions. The story deals with both the mortal and divine, and is one of the few of Ovid's stories that ends happily. Also, as a whole, it provides an excellent example of how the theme an internal narrator attempts to convey can greatly differ from that conveyed by the context in which the internal narrator attempts to convey such a theme. The internal narrator's theme is purely moral, the wider theme expressed by the context is metaphysical.

Results

The results of the examination of these stories allow us to form an in-depth and non-contradictory picture of the philosophical outlook on life inherent within the *Metamorphoses*' tales, and enables us to identify the sort of sense-of-life that stems from and is implicitly expressed by the poem as a whole.

The main aspects of this underlying philosophical outlook can be summarised as follows:

In the realm of metaphysics we see the presentation of individual characters (both gods and mortals) as being made up of an inherent dichotomy between the mind and body (reason and emotion), both pulling in different directions, neither of which is reconcilable with the other. This, in combination with the presence of superior forces in the universe that are both capricious and interested in determining the destinies of individuals, means that the positive or negative fates of the individual characters are out of their hands. This is consistent with the fact that chance often features in bringing about unexpected fates (both positive and negative) for the poem's characters and, as a whole, reveals a large streak of metaphysical determinism inherent in the poem's philosophical outlook.

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When it comes to epistemology and ethics, three different approaches to morality are presented: the approach that holds morality as intrinsic and the knowledge of which is either innate, self-evident, or stems from authorities; the subjective approach, which can be equated with “anything goes” depending on the whim or emotion of the moment, and which follows no fixed moral code; and what I term a “mixed” approach, which follows a certain moral code, but one determined independently, without reference to authorities.

A certain set of morals and values is associated with each approach and these are both explicitly and implicitly evaluated within the text by various means: explicitly by the opinions of the internal narrator and characters who are depicted as being in-tune with the workings of reality; and implicitly by whether or not they are presented as leading those who follow them to success, happiness, achievement of their goals, and positive fates. Both the subjective and the mixed approaches are explicitly presented negatively, and the intrinsic positively. However, all three are implicitly depicted as ultimately ineffective.

As a whole, the sense-of-life generated by these philosophical ideas and the presentation of the universe’s metaphysics, epistemology and ethics is a profoundly malevolent one. The implication is that while tragedy and failure are not universal, such things are likely, both on account of the metaphysical nature of the universe and the forces contained within it, and the inefficacy of whatever approaches to morality one might hold. The nature of the universe is presented as one that is hostile to success, happiness, achievement.

Methodology in detail

The specifics of my methodology in approaching each story, and the ultimate layout of each chapter, can be divided into six parts as follows:

In *1. Introduction*, I give a brief overview of the myth, the context in which it is told within the *Metamorphoses*, and discuss various aspects of the pre-Ovidian history of the myth which are particularly useful in aiding understanding of Ovid’s version. For instance, by understanding what had been done before, we may better conjecture as to what narrative touches are original to Ovid. And by identifying what Ovid chose to include or exclude in comparison to other authors, we can more easily determine what points of a story’s conflict,

events, and characters are likely to be important with regard to the themes presented explicitly within the work. Had Ovid merely chosen on whim which version to follow and what details to include, or based his tale on the first version that came to hand, this information would be, for my purposes, all but useless. However, the evidence suggests otherwise. I agree with Otis (1970), p.89, with regard to the decisions Ovid makes regarding what to present and how to present it, and what parts of what sources to include deviate from, that “all these ... are dictated by the effect or point he wants to bring out in a special context.” In addition, knowing Ovid’s sources makes it easy to identify allusions to other versions of the tale which, given the context in which they are found, can by contrast or association help emphasise certain aspects of characterisation, plot, or theme in Ovid’s version.⁴²

In 2. Conflict, I identify which character makes the key choices and actions that drive the story, which character opposes them to create the story’s central conflict (that upon which the whole story hangs, and from which the actions that lead to the story’s conclusion stem), as well as the issue over which they come into conflict. This is by far the shortest and simplest section of each chapter, but by no means the least important, as it is the starting point for my methodology. It is by means of the central conflict – who is doing what to whom, over what issue – that we can discover which characters and which of their actions are essential to make the story unfold as it does and identify the results which, in combination with the reasons for them, are an expression of the story’s explicit themes. From these we can shed light on the facets of the philosophical outlook that must be present in the work to allow these themes to exist. Thus the main conflict is the nucleus of the story, to which both the story’s plot and its ultimate themes are directly related.⁴³ It is the conflict on account of which the main characters act to achieve their values, and from which stems the sequence of events that concretise the story’s explicit themes.

⁴² See Glenn (1986), p.ix, who properly identified the place, in a study like this, of Ovid’s use of previous versions of the myths he includes in his poem.

⁴³ I define *plot* as a sequence of events in which every major one is connected to and derives from those preceding it, and through which one or more characters moves to achieve one or more goals. Since volitional beings are in reality goal-oriented, that is, bound by their very nature to make choices (whether they are conscious of it or not), even if the choice is to do something or consider a certain issue or not, the very implication of creating a character (irrespective of whether it is human or not) and placing it in and having it interact with a universe, necessitates goals and therefore the basics of a plot. However, as we will see, Ovid’s main aim in these stories seems to be more related to the depiction of characters - specifically ones who move through a series of events, against a certain background, rather than logical progressions of events - and so when I use the term *plot*, I also loosely mean the character’s journey through a certain series of events.

Put another way, if there is no conflict, one cannot prove abstract meaning in a story, since there will be no plot, no ideas in context of action, and no demonstrable values at stake from which to judge who succeeded or failed to achieve what and why. In reality, conflict is not necessary to prove the pursuit of a purpose. However, if one intends to dramatize purpose/goals (that is, in essence, values) in literature, struggle is necessary, that is, conflicts with obstacles (both physical and mental) with which a character must deal in order to illustrate both the authenticity and degree of the value at stake. Thus conflict is necessary to have a message or meaning and make a story.

The next part of each chapter is 3. Plot-development. When an author constructs a story, he may approach it from several angles. For instance, he may start from characters, theme, or plot. If he starts with characters, he then must determine what conflicts they will come into and why, what the outcomes will be, and what meanings will result. Likewise, he may choose to begin with a theme, in which case he must consider what characters and actions are needed to concretise it. Or he may begin with a plot, and create the characters that can enact it and work out the meaning which will result. Be that as it may, whichever approach he takes, at some point it becomes necessary to develop the plot; the central conflict, once established, must be dramatized and concretised in the form of action.

Examination of how this occurs is important as it is only through the characters' actions (and words in dialogue – those words to which the context of the action situation in which they are spoken implies specific motivations) that we can see a concretization of the values the characters hold and are pursuing. And it is by examining the characters' actions through the events of the story that we can identify the reasons that these characters in these situations have the fates they do, and thus prove the abstract themes of the story. This examination is also useful to this study in that it provides us with evidence as to which events, choices, actions relate to the story's abstract themes. It consequently enables us, when we come to section 6. *Overall Philosophical Outlook*, to prove that the aspects of the identified underpinning philosophical outlook are in fact inherent in the characters and events of the plot.

In this section I examine the structure of the story and how the different elements – such as plot and characterisation – are integrated; see whether/how the plot progresses logically; how it integrates with the theme; what consequences result from the central conflict; and investigate the nature and amount of other conflicts which hang on the central conflict and

how they stem from and express or emphasise it. Thus we discover who makes the decisions that matter to the outcome of the story and under what circumstances.

I have chosen to examine the plot-structure of each story in three parts, as Aristotle put it, a beginning, middle, and end:⁴⁴

Backstory and establishment of the situation. This constitutes the events that occur before the central conflict arises, and contains all the information that is necessary to get the main characters to this point. It thus includes the context in which the events occur, the inciting incident – the event which brings the main characters into the situation in which they come into conflict – if given; and the introduction of the main characters, their key characteristics, the values at stake which motivate them to their actions, and the authenticity of their emotions.

Build up – the rise to the climax and the climax itself. These are the events between the establishment of the main conflict and the climax of the value at stake. The climax is the point in the story at which the essential characters make their final and irreversible decisions regarding the main conflict which, ultimately, dictate the final outcome. From it one should, given the characters and the actions and the way they have been portrayed up to this point, be able to tell what will happen (although not necessarily how it is going to happen), or at least in retrospect be able to see that this was the decisive point from which the remaining events of the story logically progressed.

Resolution – the results of the climax and aftermath. This constitutes the remainder of the story, in which we are presented with the reactions to the main characters' irrevocable decisions, and the ultimate consequences of the climax for all parties involved.

In this section the story's minor conflicts are mentioned. In stories that are logically integrated (as are all of those I have chosen to examine in this study), all minor conflicts of the inset digressional stories in Ovid either hang on and stem from the main conflict, or are

⁴⁴ Arist. *Poet.* 7, (1450b, 24-34), states that the action of a tragedy should be complete in itself "as a whole of some magnitude ... a whole is that which has beginning, middle, and end. A beginning is that which ... has naturally something else after it; an end is that which is naturally after something itself, either as its necessary or usual consequent, and with nothing else after it; a middle, that which is by nature after one thing and has also another after it." (trans. Bywater, 1909) "κεῖται δὴ ἡμῖν τὴν τραγωδίαν τελείας καὶ ὅλης πράξεως εἶναι μίμησιν ἐχούσης τι μέγεθος· ... ὅλον δέ ἐστιν τὸ ἔχον ἀρχὴν καὶ μέσον καὶ τελευτήν. ἀρχὴ δέ ἐστιν ὃ αὐτὸ... μετ' ἐκεῖνο δ' ἕτερον πέφυκεν εἶναι ἢ γίνεσθαι· τελευτὴ δέ τοιούναντίον ὃ αὐτὸ μὲν μετ' ἄλλο πέφυκεν εἶναι ἢ ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἢ ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ, μετὰ δέ τοῦτο ἄλλο οὐδέν· μέσον δέ ὃ καὶ αὐτὸ μετ' ἄλλο καὶ μετ' ἐκεῖνο ἕτερον."

connected to and used to emphasise it.⁴⁵ Although only tangential to the main conflict, and on the surface dealing with the stated theme of the work (metamorphoses), it can be seen that they are carefully chosen to emphasise, express, and add weight to the explicit themes of the other stories around them.⁴⁶ What these are and where they fit into the story will be listed here so that their relevance will be clear by the time they are discussed in 5. *Theme*.

It should be noted that the stories of the *Metamorphoses*' are not generally structured in such a linear fashion as the above analysis – they can rarely be segmented into beginning, middle, and end by line numbers.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, I have chosen to structure my analysis in this way as I find it helpful in separating the aspects of the story that are merely used to set up the situation and portray characters' motives and values at stake, from those that are important in enacting the main conflict, and these in turn from the ones which portray the results of the main conflict.

4. Characterisation follows the discussion of *plot-development*. Characterisation gives a deeper insight into the integration between plot and theme and offers further concretisation of the nature of the universe in which the story is set. In this way it further concretises the story being presented, as well as its theme.

Characterisation is important to this study primarily because the direction the plot takes depends on the characters that are placed in the position of making the key decisions. Also, as the abstract themes (and to some extent, philosophical outlook) stem from what is inherent in

⁴⁵ Subplots are linked to the main story by their relationship to the main theme, no matter how incongruous they otherwise seem. See 5. *Theme of Phaethon*.

⁴⁶ As Fränkel (1956), p.97, notes: "The closer we look into any one group of stories, the more cross-connections shall we discover, in addition to the pragmatic thread which runs through the whole sequence. Certain ideas, types, moods, or shapes persist for a while and then fade out." "The economy of the *Metamorphoses* is not exclusively determined by such factors as genealogy, chronology, geography, the influence of source books, etc.; ideas, too, play some part in the grouping of the stories... and ideas, with their recurrence within the same neighbourhood, make not only for coherence but also for a measure of profundity" (p.213, n.30). See sources listed in n.9 above, and additionally Albrecht (1999); Brown (2005), pp.41-2; and particularly Barchiesi (2006), who aptly notes, "experience of other narrative works suggests that between frames and inserted stories mutual implications may arise, interconnections only hinted at, but integral to the creation of meaning. For example, an internal audience's reception of a story can suggest to the reader a model of interpretation (which in turn may be adopted or dismissed). In other cases, the identity of the narrator can have an implicit relation to a theme, or even the style of the narrative entrusted to him or her. These are general guidelines to be kept in mind..." (p.276).

⁴⁷ For instance in some, we are not given the full three parts, and in others the establishment only happens by the time of the climax, meaning that there is little rise in intensity – only in the establishment, which is incidental to the main conflict.

the characters and their actions, characterisation must first be dealt with clearly before we address the issue of theme.

When a story is based around goal-directed characters, it necessarily has a meaning or theme that is in some way related to the characters, their actions or their fates. If one wishes to find and show meaning or theme, one needs to understand the motivations behind the words and actions of the indispensable characters, those upon whose decisions and actions the plot and the direction of the story as a whole depend. If one cannot identify what types of characters are performing what actions, or is ignorant of their motivations for doing so, one cannot show such actions as being linked to any theme or meaning in the story.

In this section, I focus for the most part on understanding and explaining the motives behind the characters' actions, through which the fundamental elements/ principles unique to their characters can be established. I examine each character separately, observing particularly what we can glean about them through their words and actions, these being the most reliable for establishing a person's nature, as both actions and words (primarily dialogue) can be taken in respect of the current action situation. The context of the action situation in which the words are spoken and the actions committed, implies specific motivations for those words and actions at that time.

In this section, I also include an examination of whether or not the presentation of the main characters is a predominantly positive or negative one. I do not mean whether or not Ovid presents these characters so that they should or should not be thought of positively by the reader, merely whether he presents them favourably, whether he draws them in a sympathetic light given the situations in which they find themselves, or gives a generally sympathetic portrayal of the ultimate or implied fate of a character. Additionally, as we will see later, the way a character is characterised, combined with their either positive or negative representation, is important in determining what themes are present in a character's actions and fate, and ultimately the work's overall implied philosophical outlook.

For example, for the purposes of this study, when a main character dies, one needs to know what this means in relation to the story's explicit themes. If there is, for instance, a conflict of which the summary is "A versus B" and A is shown to be good and presented positively, and comes through triumphant, then the *theme* that stems from this is likely to be something along the lines of "A is virtuous" or "A's actions lead to success." Whereas if the situation is the

same and yet A comes off badly, then the theme may well be “A is right and B wrong” but the work’s broader outlook shows that this theme might be further qualified by other factors, such as the involvement of gods in the matter, certain types of motivations, or the time period, location, or culture in which the action takes place. This is but one example, of which there can obviously be numerous variants.

5.Theme. Having identified the main characters and their natures, I identify the meaning of the story’s principal – and usually moral – issues; that which is explicit and directly given by the text, the meaning which logically stems from (is inherent in) what happens to the main characters and why. According to this definition, what kind of resolution a particular situation drawn with particular characters acting on particular motives has, and how it is achieved, will imply the theme.⁴⁸ When attempting to identify a story’s explicit themes, we must consider: the main issues behind the conflict; the kind of characters enacting the conflict (i.e. what are the immediate motives behind their actions); the outcome; and then, after understanding the reason for this outcome, we can grasp the fundamentals of the philosophical outlook from which the theme being expressed stems.

As mentioned above, the *theme* is the sum of the explicit abstract meaning of certain events (that concretise it), although it does not necessarily have to be a philosophical moral/ message. It may, for example, be as varied as the representation of a certain society in a certain context, the way in which people interact in certain situations, or the presentation of a historical situation. Most of the stories presented in the *Metamorphoses* explicitly have at least semi-philosophical/ life-view themes or messages, which in turn give us an insight into part of the overall outlook on which these are based.

Also in 5. *Theme*, I look at the story’s digressions, tangential stories and subplots, to see whether the themes found in the characters, actions, and outcomes of the main story are supported in the minor conflicts that stem from, are integrated into, express and emphasize the main conflict. If so, given that the *Metamorphoses*’ stories are logically integrated, this can provide further evidence that these themes form part of the work’s overall implicit philosophical outlook.

⁴⁸ Note that Ovid does not offer themes without characters – i.e. he is not didactic, offering moral lessons which do not stem from and are not integrated into the plot, characters and actions. Thus the themes found to be inherent in his stories (by observing character and events and understanding their abstract meaning) are theoretical, but is theory that can be objectively discovered and proved to be necessary given certain aspects of each story.

Finally, we come to 6. Overall Philosophical Outlook. Up to this point, we have identified the main conflict, examined the actions which concretise the main conflict – and the characters who enact them, and found the principal explicit abstract messages/ themes inherent in these characters, their actions, their subsequent fates and the reasons why they are as they are. In this section, I look at the aspects of the work's overall philosophical outlook on life which are inherent in the above, and whose existence is necessitated by the existence of the themes discovered. I consider both what can be stated for certain, as well as what has so far only been implied or suggested.

This is primarily achieved by understanding the main implications of the themes of the story on the various branches that constitute a philosophical outlook (specifically relating to the realms of metaphysics, epistemology and ethics). I also draw upon other evidence pertaining to these branches which has been found through the examination of Ovid's method of treatment of various aspects of the myth, such as plot-development, style, language used, and means of characterisation.

Glossary

Abstract: a concept which, through mental focus, can be isolated and separated from the context within which and the means by which it is presented.

Basic conflict: the most obvious and superficial expression of, and that which expands into, the central/main conflict of a given story.

Central/Main conflict: the conflict upon which a story depends, and from which the actions that lead to the story's conclusion stem; the conflict on account of which the main characters act to achieve their values, and from which stems the sequence of events that concretize the story's explicit themes.

Chance (with regard to the kind of fate to which a character comes): an occurrence which lacks a cause that can be ascertained, understood, foreseen or controlled.

Determinism: the idea that characters' fates are not directed by their own choices and actions, but determined by factors – either internal or external – outside their understanding or control, such as the gods, Fates, their own emotions, or character-traits with which they were born.

Epistemology: the branch of philosophy which deals with knowledge, specifically, how it is acquired and certified – the status of concepts.

Essential: fundamental, those details (whether of character, plot, action) upon which the rest depend and without which would be impossible or become meaningless; the aspects which distinguish a story/character/action from all others and whose difference would make the greatest change in the essence of whatever is being depicted, or whose removal would entail a contradiction, that is, make the existence of the character, plot, theme etc. impossible.

Ethics: the branch of philosophy which deals with morality – the code of moral values by which one makes one's choices in one's words and actions.

Glossary

Explicit (with regard to evaluation of characters): the evaluation which evidence shows to be deliberately promoted on the part of the narrating voice and the internal characters who have a true/reliable grasp of reality (i.e. how the metaphysics and epistemology and ethics of the *Metamorphoses*' universe works).

Explicit theme: that which is directly expressed – the logical abstract meaning of particular events and their results given in the text.

Inherent: existing in and inseparable from.

Implicit (with regard evaluation of characters): the evaluation which reflects the whole truth with regard to a character's presentation – by what happens to character, their morals, and the reasons why – irrespective of whether or not this agrees with their explicit evaluation.

Implicit philosophical ideas: those which are present within the text, but not obviously so – those suggested by combination of that which is explicit and obvious, and which must necessarily be present to allow the explicit to exist without contradiction.

Inciting incident: the event which causes a story's main characters – particularly the protagonist – to initiate the central conflict.

Intrinsic approach to morality: the approach that holds what is moral, right and true is intrinsically so, and therefore only *may* be in accord with what one can derive from observation of perceptual reality and the facts of life, and consequently the full knowledge of which can only be innate, self-evident, or stem from authorities.

Malevolent sense-of-life: the idea that while tragedy and failure are universal or, if not universal, such things are likely, both on account of the metaphysical nature of the universe and the forces contained within it, and the inefficacy of whatever approaches to morality one might hold. The idea that the nature of the universe is presented as one that is hostile to success, happiness, achievement.

Metaphysics: the branch of philosophy which deals with the nature of existence, of reality, the world, oneself, and one's relationship to the universe and the different forces active within it.

Glossary

Mixed approach to morality: the approach that holds to a certain fixed moral code underpinning a character's choices, values and actions, but one determined and validated *independently*, without reference to and often in spite of that which is depicted as intrinsic.

Necessary (with respect to underpinning philosophical ideas): any aspect of a philosophical outlook whose removal would entail a contradiction, that is, make the existence of the themes present in a story impossible.

Plot: the sequence of events in which every major one is connected to and derives from those preceding it, and through which one or more characters moves to achieve one or more goals.

Plot-theme: a description – in terms of action – of the central conflict upon which the whole story hangs, the means by which the abstract themes/messages are integrated into the plot situation, and the focal crossover point between theme and the plot and the sequence of events by which the themes are concretized.

Primaries (with regard to emotions): not having a fixed cause – treated as axiomatic facts which do not stem from any particular presuppositions (such as value-judgements or any other identifiable aspect of a character's choices, actions, or premises held – consciously or subconsciously).

Selfish: self-interested, concerned primarily with what one sees as one's own interests, irrespective of whether rational or irrational.

Sense-of-life: underlying implicit estimate of, attitude towards and feeling about existence.

Subjective approach to morality: the approach based on no fixed code or moral principles, and which can be equated with "anything goes" depending on the whim or emotion of the moment.

Theme: the *explicit* message/meaning of certain events of a given story (that concretise it).

Values: anything that is important enough for a character to exert effort to achieve, acquire or keep. This may or may not be physically tangible.

Virtue: strong and/or consistent adherence to a particular kind of morality or value system.

Key Concepts

In the following chapters I have provided, as they arise, full explanation of the philosophical ideas encountered and terms used. However, there are a couple of key concepts which it may be helpful to foreshadow here, since they occur in each chapter and become increasingly important as we progress in identifying and integrating different aspects of the philosophical outlook inherent within the *Metamorphoses*.

Mind/body dichotomy (emotion and its relationship to reason):

One important aspect encountered in each of the following chapters is that Ovid's characters are presented as being subject to an inherent dichotomy between mind and body, or, to state it another way, between reason and emotion. This dichotomy is expressed through conflicts and contrasts between its two sides.

As we will see, characters presented as acting impulsively, solely according to their emotions (the feelings of the moment), or making choices and committing actions in which their emotions are a significant guiding factor (whether they are aware of it or not), are usually found concerning themselves with the physical and material aspects of their lives, pursuing personal values, and behaving in a manner that can broadly be termed as self-interested. Additionally, such characters usually appear either to ignore the issue of morality, or to allow their emotions (either consciously or subconsciously) to be a factor when passing judgement on moral issues. As a general rule, the more they are dependent on or motivated by their feelings, the more we see them: failing to consider the context or consequences of their words and actions; acting irrationally; and apparently oblivious to possible dangers (both for themselves and others), as well as the laws of man, god, and nature itself.

This presentation contrasts with that of characters who attempt to use reason – whose thought, speech and action has a primarily rational base (a use of the mind to consciously

choose and act upon underlying explanatory principles). Indeed, we see these characters, depending on how little they depend on or take heed of their emotions, have: a greater disdain or indifference to all which could be termed as self-interest; greater awareness of mortal, divine, and nature's laws; greater concern for morality; and a greater tendency to consider the context and consequences of their words and actions.

We particularly see the different directions in which emotion and reason point in *Chapters 1, 3, and 4*. The power emotions have to overrun characters and make them act in ways completely opposite to those to which they are accustomed when apparently uninfluenced by emotion is an explicit theme in *Chapter 2*, and is present in several others.

However, despite these opposites, this does not mean that choices and actions based on a strong emotional influence are always presented as different from those with rational thought as their progenitors. Indeed, characters' emotions are presented as having the potential to be in accord with rational thought. Importantly though, even when emotions are in accord with reason, the means of getting there – the thought processes involved – are diametrically opposed. When emotions are the primary influence in one's words and deeds, reason is not, and although one may consequently act in a way not disagreeable to either reason or morality, this, as we will see, is portrayed in the *Metamorphoses* as merely a coincidence.

The above can be understood from the presentation of emotions within the poem. In the world Ovid creates, feelings are not, as Aristotle held, intelligible and explicable as automatic results of consciously or subconsciously held value-judgements.¹ On the contrary, the identification and understanding of their causes is implied to be beyond the capabilities of the rational mind. Nor is their treatment akin to the teachings of the Stoics and Epicureans who, in principle, have the same basic approach to the source of emotions as Aristotle (in which emotions were tied at least in some respect to rational or irrational thoughts and conclusions), although differ with regard to their beliefs in the individual's ability to explain the quantitative element of these emotions; rationally justify, ignore or act upon them; or banish

¹ See particularly Arist. *Nic. Eth.* 3.1-5 (1109b – 1114b), and *Rhet.* 2.1-11 (1377b-1388b). The scholarship on Aristotle's views of emotion is vast, but as a good starting point, comparing his views to those of other ancient thought, see Konstan (2006). For ancient emotions in general, see Nussbaum (1994), and Cairns and Fulkerson (2015).

purely emotional thought, choice or action from one's life.² Emotions in the *Metamorphoses* are treated in a manner more akin to the teaching of the early Sophists (such as Protagoras), as feelings which are not entirely (if at all) explicable or intelligible by means of reason, whose origins are traceable neither to character nor value-judgements, and therefore must, by implication, be inflicted upon the individual either by nature, the gods, or some other incomprehensible internal or external force.³

Indeed, emotions and their causes in Ovid's poem are never explained in depth, either explicitly or implicitly, and the characters influenced by emotion, are presented as wholly lacking in consciously determined or chosen reasons for holding the values they pursue. Emotions are treated as irreducible and inexplicable primaries; feelings which do not have a fixed cause; axiomatic facts which do not stem from any particular presuppositions (such as value-judgments or any other identifiable aspect of a character's choices, actions, or premises held – consciously or subconsciously), but rather, are presented as fundamental causes behind characters' choice of values.

As a consequence, the efficacy of the mind of the individual is limited by the presence of emotion, which has an irrational base, and about which the individual can do nothing. The fact that the irreconcilable dichotomy between reason and emotion is presented as inherent in the metaphysical makeup of both mortal and immortal characters, effectively means that the results of emotional choices and actions are beyond their control. Thus their free-will and capacity for directing their lives by independent choice is, in reality, severely restricted.

Determinism:

The idea that emotions are primaries, over which characters have little or no control, combined with the idea that the individual is consequently the embodiment of an irreconcilable dichotomy between mind and body, leads onto another issue which appears throughout this thesis and may be helpful to outline at the start: the idea of determinism. This idea is implied (and sometimes made explicit) in many of Ovid's stories in a number of ways.

² For a general outline of both the Stoic and Epicurean ideas, see Gill (1997), pp.5-15, as well as Sorabji (2000), Armstrong (2007), and various articles in Cooper (1999). For the similarities between these approaches and that of Aristotle, see Inwood (1985).

³ See Guthrie (1971), pp.164-75, 181-8.

Key Concepts

Determinism, as I use the term, is the idea that characters' fates are not directed by their own choices and actions, but determined by factors outside their understanding or control. These factors can be split into two categories, external determining agencies, and internal ones.

In Ovid, external determining agencies include the gods, who are, on the whole, presented as having power over the choices, actions, emotions and ultimate fates of individuals (both mortal and immortal), and metaphysical power over the nature of the universe in which they move. Likewise, we see the Fates (sometimes personified) representing an external determining agency, who have power over all of the above, including the gods (although exactly how their power takes effect is largely unexplained).

Internal factors are most clearly visible in the form of emotions being presented as primaries (discussed above), with no identifiable cause – especially not ones presented as reflective of a character's choices, consciously or subconsciously held philosophical moral tenets or value-judgments. Thus characters' values and subsequent choices and actions, if influenced by emotion, are ultimately determined by factors outside their ability to control.

From these aspects, it is further possible to formulate two broad and distinct pictures of how determinism works in Ovid's poem – both of which were common in the ancient world. One is the idea held by thinkers as early as Heraclitus that everything, including human thought, action and achievement is determined in advance by higher powers, such as fate and the gods.⁴ The other is that the individual has what can broadly be termed as free-will, but that the above factors determine key aspects of their lives on a moment-by-moment basis. In philosophical terms, this is essentially a cross between the first idea, which treats free-will effectively as an illusion because it has no power to deal with forces that exist in the world and whose workings are not intelligible to reason, and the idea most famously and lengthily explained by Aristotle, that man – or in the case of a world in which superman beings exist and are active, the individual – is at birth essentially a *tabula rasa* and in charge of his own destiny.⁵

⁴ See Nikoletsias (2015), and Patrick (1969). More broadly on pre-Ovidian ideas of determinism, see Whitaker (1996) and Kane (2002). See also Kajanto (1961), and Cicero's *De Fata*.

⁵ Arist. *De Anima*, 3.4, (429b-430a). Although it should be noted that Aristotle was not one hundred percent consistent in this regard. Even he still held that man still possessed some natural tendencies. Similarly, although Aristotle did not repudiate the idea of the divine (indeed for the most part he more or less ignored it), it is worth remembering that his "Unmoved Mover" (see primarily *Physics*, Book 8, 250b-260a, and *Metaphysics*, Book 12, 1069a-1076a) was not formulated as a being which took an active part in determining

Key Concepts

As we will see, evidence for and examples of both of these views are found in Ovid, and while it is true that both forms are at the same time present in the works of most extent ancient authors, as we will see, these seemingly incompatible ideas are given a much more equal balance in the *Metamorphoses* than in others' works. This often leads to seemingly glaring inconsistencies and contradictions as to what power is responsible for what choices, what actions, and what results. This is most evident in the story of Meleager (discussed in *Chapter 4*), although it is also a significant issue and discussed in detail in my analysis of the stories of Phaethon; Ceres, Dis & Proserpina; and Pygmalion (*Chapters 1, 2, and 6*). For example, in authors such as Vergil, both views of determinism are implied, although the idea that fate and the gods are ultimately what determines man's destinies, and that this is planned-out well in advance, is the dominant view. In other authors, such as Sophocles, while the idea of long-term determinism is almost always present, what we in fact see in action is characters acting according to their own free-will, and logical results occurring in accordance with this, and what determinism there is, is primarily present in the form of moment-by-moment divine intervention.

Full discussion of the issue of determinism in Ovid, and the difference between Ovid and other authors, can be found in my *Synthesis & Conclusions* (pp.208ff). As we will see, Ovid's depiction of determinism, including this bipolarity, is consistent with the philosophical outlook implicit within the text.

the world's events, rather, a being responsible for both existence and making the world intelligible to logic and reason. See Randall (1960), particularly pp.134-44.

Chapter 1 – Phaethon

The story of *Phaethon* (1.747-2.400) is the longest single story found in the *Metamorphoses* to run continuously without tangential or subsidiary mythological digressions dealing with matters of metamorphosis. It is centred on two figures in conflict over personal desires with world-scale consequences. The structure of the plot is logical and the themes explicit in its events and results are applicable to both gods and mortals.

In *Phaethon*, we see the explicit depiction of reason and emotion as opposite, selfishness as linked with emotion, and emotion-based action as leading logically to destruction. The broader ideas that these imply give a fascinating insight into the views that make up the philosophical outlook inherent in the *Metamorphoses*. In the realms of epistemology and ethics, we see two important approaches to knowledge/ morality, and discuss how these may be identified: the subjective approach (associated with action based on emotion alone); and elements of the intrinsic approach (the holding of certain morals, values, and actions as intrinsically right, just, moral, and to be upheld, sought, and enacted regardless of context or consequences). Finally, we discover the kinds of morals and values that are associated with the aforementioned approaches, and how acting consistently in accordance with each can be destructive. Also, in the realm of metaphysics, both divine and mortal characters are represented as having an inherent and irreconcilable dichotomy between mind and body, observable in the form of a natural conflict between reason and emotion. We see a hierarchy of the various types of forces present in the universe (we see the gods above men, some gods above others, the power of love above the gods, and the Fates above all). From a combination of these last two points the concept of determinism that is prevalent in Ovid's work arises.

1. Introduction¹

The story of Phaethon is one of those most often referred to by other ancient authors. It is usually found in a simply anecdotal context, but is also used in a didactic/ moralistic way,² and as the artistic focus of a literary tale. Perhaps this popularity derives from the compelling essence of the story: a youth named Phaethon, the mortal son of a mortal woman and Phoebus – the sun god, who gives light to the earth each day by driving resplendent in his chariot across the sky – manages to gain possession of his father's chariot in order to drive it for a day. However, he loses control of it and on account of the great damage he does to the earth and its inhabitants through his wayward flight, Juppiter strikes him with a thunderbolt.³ Dead, he falls from the chariot into a river and is mourned by his sisters, who then transform into poplar trees that shed amber tears. These are the main points of the Phaethon myth and one or more of these constitutes the basis of nearly every ancient reference to Phaethon and the story surrounding him.⁴

The earliest extant references to the name Phaethon are found in Homer and Hesiod, but of the numerous pre-Ovidian literary references⁵ to the myth of Phaethon,⁶ the majority are merely made in passing. By far the most significant in size is the fragmentary remains of Euripides' *Phaethon*, with which Ovid's story has much in common and which seems to have been a direct influence on the *Metamorphoses*' version.⁷ Consequently, spotting literary allusions to it in Ovid's text can suggest to the reader what backstory can be assumed, and

¹ For a discussion of the relevance of the Phaethon story to those around it in the *Metamorphoses*, see particularly Wheeler (2000) "specifically in relation to the flood account, with which it clearly corresponds" (pp.36-47), and Brown (1987), pp.211-20, who focuses on the internal ekphrasis. See also the commentaries, such as those of Anderson (1997) and Bömer (1969-86).

² Such as: Cic. *De Nat. De.* 3.31; Hom. *Od.* 4.11; Lucret. 5.392ff; Suet. *Gaius.* 11; Sen. *Med.* 598ff.

³ The forms of the proper nouns I use over the course of this study are those that Ovid most frequently uses in the *Metamorphoses*.

⁴ I refer the interested reader to Diggle (1970) for a thorough summary of the history of the Phaethon myth. See also Otis (1970), pp.389-95, for a discussion of Ovid's use of sources – particularly compared to those used by Nonnus and Lucian; and Knox (1988), pp.536-551.

⁵ No confirmed visual representations are known to be extant from before Ovid's time. See Diggle (1970), pp.205-20, and Collard, Cropp and Lee (1995), p.196.

⁶ These include Hes. *Theog.* 984-91; Eurip. *Hipp.* 739-41; *Phaeth.* (frag.); Philoxenus of Cythera (Greek Lyric V, from Pliny *N.H.* 37.31.393), frag. 834; Plat. *Tim.* 22c; Arist. *Meteor.* 345a; Ap. Rhod. 3.245, 3.1236, 4.598-611, 4.623-6; Polyb. 2.16; Lucret. 5.392ff; Cat. 64; Cic. *De Nat. De.* 3.31; *De Off.* 3.94; Dio. Sic. 5.23.2; Hor. *Od.* 4.11; Ver. *Ec.* 6, *Aen.* 5.105, 10.185-93; Varro Atacinus frag. 10; Scholia *ad Pind. Olymp.* 7.131-2.

⁷ Although only a fraction of Euripides' play survives, the similarities in both wording and plot between the two are self-evident, particularly in respect to Phaethon's motivation for visiting his father – his search for confirmation of parentage, which seems likely to have been original to Euripides. Furthermore, as Diggle (1970) points out, both the references to Merops and the nuptials of Phaethon's sisters in the Ovidian version make more sense when the domestic situation of Euripides' plot is kept in mind (p.182).

highlight the explicit themes that stem from the characters, their motivations, their actions and their subsequent fates.

The post-Ovidian references are mostly negligible;⁸ the only ones that give significant length and detail to the myth in any form are those of Hyginus,⁹ Nonnus,¹⁰ and Philostratus,¹¹ all of whom show Ovidian influences.¹² Significantly, both Hyginus and Nonnus have features of the story which are unique. Even some of the minor references by post-Ovidian authors give details not found in Ovid or that differ from those in the *Metamorphoses*.¹³ This suggests that there are missing links in the tradition of the story (such as Aeschylus' lost *Heliades*),¹⁴ and that at least in the case of this myth, it is quite possible that Ovid himself included details which, although having no extant literary tradition, do in fact come from one now lost. Consequently, given Ovid's propensity to use literary allusion to highlight certain aspects of characters, theme and plot in his own tales (which will be examined in detail in later chapters), there is potentially much in this tale that an ancient reader would have been expected to see (or hoped to by the author) that we cannot. While this potentially limits our understanding of this story, we have the full text, and that will have to suffice.

2. Conflict

In any plot based around action (as are all of the stories which Ovid treats at length), somebody does something, obstacles arise, there are motives and values at stake – thus

⁸ Hyg. *Astronom.* 2.42; *Fab.* Th.38, 152a, 154, 156, 250; Apollod. *Lib.* 3.181; Strabo *Geog.* 5.1; Sen. *Med.* 598ff, 826; *Phaed.* 1088ff; *Her. Oet.* 187-8, 853-4; *De Prov.* 5.10-11; Lucan 2.410-15; Plin. *N.H.* 3.117; Val. Flacc. *Arg.* 5.428ff; Suet. *Gaius*, 11; Plut. *Pyrrh.* 1; *De Sera.* 12; *Non Posse.* 11; *De Tranqu.* 4; Stat. *Theb.* 1.219, 6.321, 12.412; Paus. *Descript.* 1.3, 1.4, 2.3.2; Luc. *V.H.*; *Elect*; Clement of Alex. *Protrep.* 2.29; Philos. *Eld. Im.* 1.11; Q. Smyrn. 5.300ff, 10.190ff; Non. *Dion.* 23.236ff, 30.112ff, 38.50(90)ff, 39.3ff; Claud. *De VI cons. Hon.* 62ff, 163-92; *In Ruf.* 2.210-11; Serv. *Comm. ad Verg. Aen.* 10.189; Scholia Basileensia *ad Caesaris Germanicus Aratea*; Eustath. *Comm. ad Hom. Od.* 11.325, p.1689.

⁹ Hyg. *Fab.* Th.38, 152a, 154, 156, 250

¹⁰ Non. *Diony.* 23.236ff, 30.112ff, 38.50(90)ff, 39.3ff

¹¹ Philos. *Im.* 1.11

¹² See Diggle (1970), pp.180-200, with whom I agree that it unlikely that after Ovid, any extant author escaped his influence (p.9).

¹³ For example, different versions are given as to the identity of Phaethon's parents (Hyg. *Fab.* 154, Apollod. *Lib.* 3.181; Paus. *Descript.* 1.3; *Scholia ad Pind. Olymp.* 7.131-2; and some include that he was loved by the goddess Aphrodite (Clement of Alex. *Protrep.* 2.29). Both of these details are found in Hes. *Theog.* 984-91

¹⁴ Aeschylus, although possibly the most prominent, was not the only pre-Ovidian author other than Euripides who covered the myth in detail. Pliny, *N.H.* 37.11.31-2, cites the five earliest sources of the myth he knew: Euripides; Aeschylus, of whom only minor fragments survive; and three others (Nicander, Satyrus, and Philoxenus), whose treatments of this story are no longer extant.

conflict. By first identifying the main conflict (who is doing what to whom, and over what issue they come into conflict), we can then identify the characters and the actions that are necessary to enact it – and which characters and actions are merely incidental – and later, by observing what is inherent in these characters and actions that bring about the story's outcomes and demonstrate the story's explicit themes.

In this story, only two characters are indispensable to the main conflict, the protagonist, Phaethon, whose decisions move the story, and the antagonist, the person with whom he is primarily in conflict, namely his father, Phoebus. It is these two characters alone whose decisions are necessary to make and resolve the main conflict around which this story revolves. Since both could have been brought to the same situation in other ways and by other characters without change to the central conflict, all other characters, such as the other gods, Clymene, and Epaphus, are non-essential and can be omitted from a statement of the main conflict. They are merely parts of the inciting incident which sets up the situation, or can only react in accordance with the decisions of the main characters.¹⁵

With regard to the issue over which these two characters come into conflict, it is easy to see that Phaethon's explicitly stated motive (2.36-7), namely to gain proof of his lineage (irrespective of whether he means public or private – see 4. *Characterisation*), is not the crux of the story. This is evidenced by the simple fact that no opposition is offered to such a desire. Phoebus, unprompted, instantly and openly acknowledges Phaethon as his son, and later promises to grant him whatever he asks as a proof. What Phoebus does oppose, as he clearly states (2.51ff), is the particular request, not the giving of a token of public proof.

Thus the main issue of conflict is Phaethon's insistence on a ride in his father's chariot – Phaethon's choice of the manner in which Phoebus should fulfil his promise.

Simply put, the main conflict of this story is Phaethon v. Phoebus over the promised favour.

¹⁵ In general, an easy way to determine what is essential in a story or character is to consider whether or not the fundamentals of the action situation being presented would be majorly changed if a particular element were removed or significantly altered.

3. Plot-development

Now we may move on to the specifics of how the central conflict is established, dramatized and concretised in the form of action; how the plot logically progresses; and its consequences.

Let us begin by examining how we get to the action situation of the main conflict: how the characters are introduced and characterised, how we see their views, what the extent of their values and emotions are, and what other information is presented as being necessary to bring the basic conflict of the plot into reality.

*Backstory and establishment of the situation*¹⁶

Firstly, we are presented with the inciting incident, namely Epaphus' insult which inflames Phaethon to initiate his course to destruction. We are introduced to Phaethon, and we get the first glimpse of his character. He is shown in his dealings with Epaphus (and his resulting actions) to be both proud and arrogant about his divine parentage, but without solid foundation for these attitudes. Further, while Phaethon's initial reaction to Epaphus' words suggest that he is motivated to commit his subsequent actions in order to obtain purely personal knowledge of his divine paternity, when Phaethon's character is further established in his supplication to his mother Clymene, the implication is that a public proof of his lineage is what he really desires.¹⁷ This contrast in motivation demonstrates one of Phaethon's key character-traits – his tendency to make impulsive decisions and actions.

¹⁶ The most thorough analysis of the internal structure of this story is that of Bass (1977), pp.402-8, who discusses the approaches taken previously. He further proposes a new framework of understanding the story's internal framework.

¹⁷ The search for lineage as a motive for Phaethon to desire to drive Phoebus' chariot is first mentioned in and very possibly originates with Euripides. However, although Fränkel (1956) proposes that "The Quarrel between Phaëthon and Epaphus may have been fashioned by Ovid after the fable told in Bacchylides' *Theseus* (no. 17 Snell)" (p.216, n.45), and certainly has tragic parallels (compare the beginning of Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*), the argument with Epaphus as a plot device seems to be an original Ovidian touch, and serves to show how the particular character of Phaethon that Ovid had in mind could logically end up meeting Phoebus, and thus emphasizes the focus of the story.

It is helpful here to remember the version of the story found in Euripides' *Phaethon*, which influences this section and was, as far as is known, the first to introduce the paternity question into the myth. In that version, Phaethon grew up believing he was the son of Merops, but was told his identity later on by Clymene. Although this version may have been the most well-known at the time Ovid published the *Metamorphoses*, we cannot assume with certainty that Ovid expected the reader to resort to it to fill in major gaps whilst reading his story.

Phaethon then, at Clymene's suggestion, sets out to gain further confirmation of his lineage from his father.¹⁸ At this point, Phoebus is introduced and characterised through his early dealings with Phaethon as a powerful and benevolent god with a deep affection for his son. Unprompted, he acknowledges Phaethon and swears to give him whatever he might ask for as proof of his paternity. Phaethon instantly asks for a ride in Phoebus' sun-chariot, confirming his character as implied in the preceding scenes. At this point Phoebus' character is also confirmed through his speeches that attempt to dissuade Phaethon from action that will clearly lead to his death. These show that unlike Phaethon, Phoebus can think rationally and has a good grasp both of the workings of the universe and of logical argument.¹⁹

Thus the two characters are introduced and brought together. The situation is established. The nature of both characters, the values at stake that motivate them to their actions, and the authenticity of their emotions are portrayed.

Interestingly, Diggle (1970) states that "Both the reaction of Phaethon to the charge of Epaphus and the reaction of Clymene to Phaethon's report of the charge suggest that Ovid is following a version of the story in which Clymene has no husband but Phoebus" (p.182) and excuses the references to Merops as "slipshod workmanship" arising from taking some details from Euripides and not others (a view not shared by Anderson 1997, on 1.763-4). However, if we consider that part of Euripides' play in which Clymene reveals Phaethon's paternity to him only *after* he grows up and long after her marriage to Merops (in contrast to the claim made by Galinsky 1970, p.50, that Phaethon had "grown up in the assumption that he is Sol's son"), and assume this background in conjunction with Phaethon's character as portrayed in Ovid (see 4. *Characterisation*), Ovid's version of the tale still makes sense and is consistent with Phaethon's thoughts about being the son of Merops when he sees his doom from the chariot (2.184).

¹⁸ Although Clymene's motivations for this suggestion are never given explicitly, even if her regard for her son were to be discarded, reason for her to tell the truth comes through the aspersion made against her by Epaphus: that she was claiming to a god the offspring of a mortal, thus putting a slur on the purity of her marriage with Merops, since she would have broken her marriage vows with another mortal, rather than a god – the latter being acceptable. Consider, for example, the first speech of Euripides' *Bacchae*, where Dionysus gives the defense of his mother against almost identical claims as part of his motivation (*Bac.* 23-42). See Anderson (1997) on 1.765-6, on Clymene's uncertain motivations.

¹⁹ A similar example to that noted above of Ovid dramatizing the important parts of his tale in dialogue and the unimportant in narrative occurs in the debate between Phaethon and his father. After Phaethon's initial request, we are never given another word in direct speech from Phaethon. We are only given his actions in narrative form and some of his thoughts when he sees his doom whilst flying out of control through the sky. The fact that Ovid does not give Phaethon's reply but narrates it instantly and with great brevity (reflected in the light, dactylic scansion of lines 2.47-8), emphasises Phaethon's hasty, foolish and headstrong decision. Examples of the form of Ovid's poetry matching the content in such a way can be found to a greater or lesser degree in all of the *Metamorphoses'* stories.

Build-up

Next the two main characters come into conflict by means of Phaethon's request for proof of his parentage, Phoebus' pledge of a favour, and Phaethon's subsequent request to use his father's sun-chariot. The discussion between Phaethon and his father constitutes the rise to the climax. However, there is still time for both characters to change their minds or back down. It is only when each character is pushed to their limit, and neither relents, that the climax is reached. Here we see the true extent of Phaethon's emotionalistic, self-interested character; the great value Phaethon is to Phoebus, and the even greater value places on keeping his word once given (see 4. *Characterisation* below).

Resolution

From here each event is a logical continuation of the last and presupposes the next. Phaethon achieves his aim in attaining his father's chariot and takes it for a drive, and Phoebus realises that his son is lost to him. While he nevertheless does all he can for his son, he still allows him to go to his doom. Phaethon is frightened by various aspects of the drive and, being an inadequate driver, loses control of the chariot. This brings Juppiter into the picture and into conflict with Phaethon at the bidding of Tellus. Tellus intervenes on her own behalf and that of her lands and inhabitants scorched by Phaethon's uncontrolled drive. Phaethon dies and the various characters react.

Additionally, scattered throughout the build-up and resolution, we see a variety of sub-plots and minor conflicts linked to the main conflict. Although characterisation must be dealt with first, all of these will later be shown not only to stem from and depend directly on the main conflict, but also to emphasise its abstract themes. These conflicts are as follows:

Phaethon v. Tellus & Juppiter – a result of the main conflict, forming part of the resolution.

Juppiter & the gods v. Phoebus – another result of the consequences of the main conflict, forming part of the resolution.

*Phaethon v. Clymene*²⁰ – a conflict consequential to the main one and expressed in its resolution.

The story of Phaethon's sisters, the Heliades, and that of Phaethon's relative Cynus, are both subplots that share common themes with the main story and form part of its resolution.

4. Characterisation

In order to fully understand the main characters and thus the logic behind the sequence of events which make up the plot, we must shed more light on the motivations behind their actions through their key decisions. Only through the understanding of motives and thus the reasons behind characters' choices and actions can we discover the fundamental attributes of their personalities. Because a story's abstract themes stem from that which is inherent in the characters and their actions, this is a necessary step towards our final conclusions.

In the two characters necessary for the key action situation of this story, we see examples of two different types of a character commonly found within the *Metamorphoses*. I classify these as the *consistent emotionalist*, and the *part-time emotionalist*. As Phaethon is the protagonist, and it is his actions that move the story, let us start by examining the nature of his character and what motivates him to speak and act as he does.

From the first, Phaethon is depicted as a youth "*iuvenem*" (2.32, 106, 150), naïve and lacking experience of life and the world, yet more than a child, and who therefore should be able to perceive, at least to some extent, what is moral, or at least in his own self-interest. He is also described by the narrator as both proud and arrogant (1.751-2), and Phaethon describes himself as unrestricted "*liber*" and spirited "*ferox*" (1.757-8). This arrogant pride and confidence is demonstrated in action in his scene with Epaphus, and particularly when shown to hold and publicly express a strong opinion on his divine parentage. However, this arrogance and pride is not presented as stemming from rational self-esteem,²¹ but is rather a

²⁰ The conflict implied by Phaethon's insistence on the chariot which ultimately deprives Clymene of her beloved son, as opposed to the conflict over Phaethon's parentage expressed openly as part of the establishment of the situation.

²¹ Genuine knowledge of his own excellence, of his ability to think and act correctly, of his own worthiness of success in his endeavours, whether mental or physical. Thus this is the root of self-confidence, both in his regard to thoughts and actions, and in regard to one's value of oneself.

façade built on emotion that is shattered in an instant when his belief – unsupported by fact – is challenged.²² When the first doubt is raised about his parentage, Phaethon is affronted and emotionally distraught, and goes straight to his mother, supposedly (it is implied – 1.760-4) in search of confirmation of his parentage.

However, as we see through his subsequent requests and desires, Phaethon's actions throughout the story are not solely or even primarily motivated by proof of his parentage in itself. This may be his initial motivation, but such private confirmation is offered quickly from both of his parents, and he is not satisfied, but moves on to seek public proof. As Fränkel (1956) puts it, Phaethon is, at this time, burning "to ascertain the truth for himself and to show the whole world whose son he really was" (p.86). The narrator's words "*concipit aethera mente*" (1.777),²³ placed where they are, before Phaethon's visit to Phoebus, suggest that as far as private confirmation goes, his mother's word was in fact enough.²⁴ Phaethon's change of motivations upon being shown an avenue for greater gain by Clymene suggests an emotional action. During the narration of Phaethon's time at Phoebus' palace, we are given several more reasons to suppose that it is emotion that is in control and that his request for a ride in the chariot is not the result of a thought-out plan to gain public proof, but a spur of the moment desire.²⁵ This is most strongly suggested by the fact that he ultimately demands this

²² Bass (1977) observes how the above (and other) adjectives used to describe Phaethon's pride and confidence early on in the story are contrasted with other opposite adjectives during the relation of his disastrous journey in Book 2. There, "he is no longer *magnanimus* (111), but *inscius* (148), *infelix* (179), *ignarus* (191), *trepidus* (194), and *mentis inops* (200)" (p.407).

²³ Anderson (1997), on 1.776-7 "Phaethon is imagining the aether as his ultimate goal, to be attained through his father."

²⁴ I do not believe, as Fränkel (1956) does, that "*dubitati*" in 2.20 conclusively shows that Phaethon still had "lingering doubt" (p.86) when approaching his father. Rather, I think this could be read simply as meaning that Phoebus' fatherhood was currently considered a question in doubt.

Further evidence for this new motivation is present in Phaethon's first speech to Phoebus, in which he says "give tokens/ pledges on account of which I may be called your true offspring, and take away this uncertainty from our minds" "*pignora da generis per quae tua vera propago/ credar, et hunc animis errorem detrahe nostris*" (2.38-9). The use of the passive "*credar*" emphasises that to Phaethon, the opinions of others are most important at this point of the story. See Wheeler (2000) p.67 and n.69. Also, given that he is the type of character to be seriously upset about the validity of his own beliefs at the doubts of another, then it is perfectly understandable that he should feel the opposite at the affirmation of his beliefs by many. Finally, as we will see, the seeking of purely private proof of his lineage is not sufficient to explain his subsequent actions.

²⁵ As Otis (1970) notes, "The wish (for the loan of the chariot) expresses the spontaneous reaction of the boy. It is all done on the spur of the moment" (p.110). Even his apparent early boldness in approaching his father would appear, by the rest of his characterisation, to be an emotionalistic action, rather than well-founded courage – especially since he is soon quaking "*paventem*" (2.31) at the sights he went so hastily "*impiger*" (1.779) to see. As Anderson (1997) notes on this passage, Phaethon's haste "receives emphasis from the five dactyls of 778." See also Otis (1970), p.109. Even without the overtly impulsive decisions of Phaethon up to this point, the story would be totally different if Phaethon consciously chose his course of action because the value he pursued meant so much to him that death would be preferable to life without it as, for example, is implied in Seneca's use of these Ovidian passages (*De Prov.* 5.10-11).

particular public favour from Phoebus, as opposed to a less deadly alternative – which his father suggests (2.95-9) – despite the highly logical and persuasive arguments against it, and the looming deadly consequences.²⁶ Indeed, it would be hard to understand how a character acting on anything other than emotion alone would fail to see that neither one's pride, nor self-interest of any kind, could be fulfilled by such a course of action.

Here we see the value Phaethon is pursuing and why his motivation to do so seems to change as the story proceeds – depending on the emotions of the moment. It is only when he feels insulted that he seeks confirmation of his lineage; it is only when his mother suggests it that he goes to his father, infused with the idea of gaining grand public proof of his lineage; and finally, it is only when his father grants him a choice of gift as proof that he asks for the one that will bring him to his ruin. Not once is Phaethon depicted as a forward thinking, introspective, or reason-based individual.²⁷

We in fact see in the character of Phaethon, a perfect example of a consistent emotionalist. This is the term I use to denote characters who instinctively do whatever their emotions dictate and seem beneficial for themselves at a given moment, and about whom there is no evidence to suggest that they have ever or will ever act in any other way. Because of their emotions, such characters' very faculty of rational judgment is nullified and no thought is given for the context, consequences, or morality of their actions. They can thus be both blind to even the most obvious facts of reality, and unable to explain in depth why they act in the way they do. Emotionalists are, in moral terms, subjectivists having, because of their consistent dependency on emotion, a subjective approach to morality. Throughout the course of this thesis, these two terms are used interchangeably, depending on whether or not morality or character is the focus of my discussion at the time.

Throughout his characterisation, Phaethon acts purely on emotion, ignores all rational advice, refuses to consider the context of his actions and ignores their potential consequences.

²⁶ As Galinsky (1975) put it, "He has no conception of the social and beneficent function of the Sun and his chariot" (p.51).

²⁷ Even when he sees his impending death, he considers only the superficial issues in which he has acted in such a way as to bring about his demise "now he regrets to have known his parentage and to have prevailed in asking," "*iam cognosse genus piget et valuisse rogando*" (2.183). Phaethon, like all who act consistently on emotion, appears to act solely according to perceptual differences in deciding which course of action to take, and is blind to any long term consequences or other more abstract, conceptual differences between them.

Indeed, his actions throughout the story are presented as nothing more than reactions to the emotions he is implied to have at any given moment.²⁸

We also see that Phaethon's tendency to follow his emotions is tied to his insecurity. This is perhaps most evident in the passive connotations of his speeches. They show the importance to Phaethon not of the strength and validity of his own thinking and assertions, but the positive or negative quality of how he appears in the eyes of others. For example, consider his words to Clymene: "this dishonour and that it was able to be said but not to be refuted *shames us*" "*pudet haec opprobria nobis/ et dici potuisse et non potuisse refelli*" (1.758-9), and the fact that, on account of this, he asks her to "give a sign of such birth and for me to *lay claim* to the heavens" "*ede notam tanti generis meque adsere caelo*" (1.761). Here, *pudet* and *adsere caelo* amount to the statement that he needs public proof as he is ashamed of not being able to reply to Epaphus. Once again in the line "now desiring *to be called* the son of Merops" "*iam Meropis dici cupiens...*" (2.184) we find a passive verb,²⁹ confirming that even at such a crucial time, it is really how other people perceive him that he holds to be important. None of this is the mark of a character with true self-esteem, but rather one who is insecure and lives through others. This is consistent with Phaethon's desire for a specifically public proof of his parentage, rather than mere assurance.

So this is Phaethon – proud, arrogant, selfish,³⁰ yet insecure; shallow and impulsive to the degree of reckless stupidity, all stemming from his emotionalistic character.

Until Phaethon graces his halls, all that has been said about Phoebus³¹ is that he is the sun-god and is said to regulate the world "*qui temperat orbem*" (1.770). However, we soon see

²⁸ Similar examples of characters in the *Metamorphoses* who appear to be consistent emotionalists include: *Glaucus*, who is stated clearly to be one whose emotions make him speak and act as he does (13:906ff); *Lycaon*, whose words and actions in pursuit of the Muses (5.289ff) show that he is at this point acting on emotion which, being backed up by general selfishness and impiety throughout the story, suggests that this is a consistent aspect of his character, although it must be said that it is possible that he is a part-time emotionalist (discussed presently) who has been overcome by passion during the night of the Muses' stay; and *Icarus*, who seems to be a consistent emotionalist. Even at the beginning he hinders his father's work while playing, and that he mortally disobeys his father's instructions out of "*cupidine*" (8.224) suggests that he is prone to acting on emotion alone.

²⁹ Just the same as in his request to Phoebus ("*credar*" 2.39 – discussed in n.24 above).

³⁰ To avoid confusion, from here on the term "selfish" simply means self-interested, that is, concerned primarily with what one sees as one's own interests, irrespective of whether rational or irrational.

³¹ The story of *Phoebus & Daphnis* (1.452-567) is excluded as it adds little to our understanding of this story except the proof that Phoebus while normally a clear thinker, has in the past been targeted by Cupid to act purely on his emotions in a certain situation on account of his scoffing at love's powers. See Wheeler (2000), pp.67-8, and Coleman (1971), p.466.

that he is far from the type of god who is superior and distant from mortals, that is often found in the *Metamorphoses*. One may expect that a god whose eyes see all (2.32) would have had a somewhat negative view of the type of son that had come asking favours under such circumstances. On the contrary, he welcomes him and his request, is all grace and kindness, and appears through both word and action to truly care for Phaethon.

The extent of Phoebus' affection and the authenticity of his love, is portrayed when he immediately confirms Phaethon to be his son, and consequently makes and fulfils the most binding oath possible to prove his paternity. The truth of this statement is endorsed by Phoebus' explanation that his own fear for his son's life is proof of his parenthood (2.91-4), combined with the terrific barrage of rational argument that follows, and his statement that what Phaethon requests is the opposite of a favour.³² The depth of Phoebus' grief is illustrated in both his words and actions upon Phaethon's death, thus proving that he son was of great personal value.

The circumstances of Phoebus' promise to Phaethon, its consequences, and his reaction to them, are also important in understanding his character, and warrant further dissection. Firstly Phoebus, in a moment of thoughtlessness occasioned by his wish to do his paternal duty by his son, makes Phaethon a promise, dangerously broad in its potential.³³ Then, upon realising that the keeping of that promise will undoubtedly lead to his son's destruction and death, he regrets the rashness of his words (2.49-50) and does everything he can to persuade his son to change his mind. Phoebus states that he would take his promise back if he could: "would that it were permitted not to give that which has been promised" "*utinam promissa liceret/ non dare*" (2.51-2).³⁴ Although Phoebus is unsuccessful, he still keeps his promise and allows his son to go to his death. In his encounter with his fellow gods at the end of the story, Phoebus offers no apologies, regrets or excuses for keeping his promise to Phaethon. Rather, he

³² See 2.98-9. Phaethon's wrongheadedness is emphasized by juxtaposition of the words *poena/ honor*, and *poenam/ munere*, each paring containing two virtually opposite meanings. Further proof is supplied by the fact that even after Phaethon has reaffirmed his decision, Phoebus anoints him with balm to protect him and further instructs him about driving through the heavens, even though there is no evidence to suggest that he genuinely believes it possible for Phaethon to escape ruin if he persists in his intended ride – particularly given his words to Phaethon and later Juppiter about how even the gods would come to ruin attempting such an action (see above).

³³ As Otis (1970) put it, "His wits have been completely worsted by his emotions" (p.110).

³⁴ "*liceret*" is here also suggestive, in that it implies that there is either someone or something (a force of nature) other than himself which has some control over his choice which he either will not or cannot overcome.

laments the consequences: implying that the keeping of his own word is of greater importance to him than the life of his child.

Understanding why Phoebus keeps his word despite knowing the great loss he that will ultimately incur, is directly related to the question of a god's ability to break an oath sworn by the Styx.

Some traditions depict an oath taken on the Styx by an immortal as unbreakable.³⁵ However, in others it is stated or implied that such an oath is technically breakable, but with major and unavoidable consequences resulting.³⁶ In its few occurrences in the *Metamorphoses* (1.188, 1.736-7, 2.46, 2.101, 3.290-1), swearing by the river Styx is not specifically said to be inherently binding in a metaphysical sense. The closest we come to such a statement is when Juppiter says "may it be by the knowing powers of the seething Styx: whose godhead is the fear of even the gods" "*Stygii quoque conscia sunt/ numina torrentis: timor et deus ille deorum est*" (3.290-1).³⁷

Nevertheless, the oath is implied to be binding in some form, and the language used suggests that this binding is more on account of divine law and morality than metaphysical restrictions.³⁸ Phoebus, when explaining the situation to Phaethon, states "thoughtless... your speech has made mine; would that it were permitted not to give that which has been

³⁵ Hom. *Il.* 14.271, Stat. *Th.* 1.291. With regard to Homer, *Il.* 15.40 could be an exception – the translation "would not foreswear" (in the sense of a moral or consequential restriction) as opposed to "could not foreswear" (in the sense of a metaphysical impossibility), is suggested by the ambiguity of the phrasing, i.e. there are more definite ways to say "could not."

³⁶ Hes. *Theog.* 775-806, Verg. *Aen.* 6.323-4, 12.826

³⁷ If indeed the breaking of such an oath were meant to be taken as a metaphysical impossibility, the gods would be stripped of free-will – the implication being that there is some determining force inherent but unconscious within the gods, which mandates that they speak and act as necessary to bring about the metaphysical fulfilment of their oaths. Although, as will be discussed later, determinism is a factor in the *Metamorphoses*, we do not clearly see it evidenced as acting in this particular fashion. Regarding Juppiter's words at 1.187-91, I follow Tarrant (2004) in punctuating with a period at the end of 189 and reading "*temptanda*" in 190. This reading constitutes an oath by the Styx that Juppiter does in fact break and adds support to the argument given above that such an oath is *not* metaphysically binding. However, for the sake of playing rational devil's advocate, the argument above is made on the basis of leaving it open that a comma were present at the end of 189 (following Anderson 1997, on 1.190), and "*temptata*" read.

³⁸ Similarly, it is relevant that Ovid, usually consistent across his *oeuvre* in matters of how the different forces in the universe interact, mentions at *Ars Am.* 1.635, that Juppiter himself was accustomed to swearing falsely by the Styx. This seems to be a reference to the *Io* episode, mentioned at *Met.* 1.736-7 "never will this be a cause of pain to you' and he ordered this to be heard by the Stygian pools" "*numquam tibi causa doloris/ haec erit; et Stygias iubet hoc audire paludes.*" Here, Juppiter makes an oath to Juno by the Styx, seemingly to the effect that if Juno releases *Io*, Juppiter will stop cheating on her. Returning to Ovid's version at 1.736-7 (which is unquestionably an oath by the Styx), irrespective of what exactly the demonstrative *haec* refers to (see Wheeler, 2000, p.74, and Anderson 1997), this passage certainly cannot be used as evidence that an oath by the Styx is truly unbreakable.

promised. I confess my son, this alone I would deny to you” “*temeraria.../ vox mea facta tua est; utinam promissa liceret/ non dare. confiteor, solum hoc tibi, nate, negarem*” (2.49-52). The use of the word “*liceret*” is key, as it implies that Phoebus is bound by some sort of arbitrary law, rather than by the nature of the universe. If the case were otherwise, it would have been quite easy for him to say clearly “if it were possible” rather than “if it were permitted.”³⁹ This implies that it is more the *choice* of consistent adherence to a certain moral code/ principle which mandates that the gods keep their promises once sworn by the Styx, whether through fear of the consequences as in Hesiod, or because their morality demands consistency.⁴⁰ Finally, Phoebus’ mourning and self-hate (2.383) following Phaethon’s death, is very much the action of one who takes responsibility for the events, rather than one caught in the grip of forces outside his control.⁴¹

³⁹ On the matter of the verb “*licet*” which can mean both “permitted” (in the moral or legal sense) and “possible” (in the metaphysical sense), as well as be used as a conjunction, roughly equating to “even if.” In most cases in which this word is used in the *Metamorphoses* the context shows which of the three definitions are to be used. Most often “permitted” fits best and, generally speaking, the context in which it is used provides a guide as to its meaning. Even when the context alone could allow either of the first two options, Ovid often uses words such as “*valet*” and “*posset*” close by and in their usage provides a juxtaposition with the “*licet*” verb to emphasise a contrast in meaning between the two and imply an “it is permitted” translation. In a handful of cases “possible” is without doubt the correct meaning, but in a few others, it can be taken as “permitted” in the sense of “permitted by the nature of one’s metaphysical makeup,” thus leaving some cases open to overlap.

⁴⁰ Additionally, if Phoebus had been caught by the nature of a universe which did not allow him to break his oath at any cost, and the decision was really “unalterable” (Otis 1970, p.111), we might expect to see some excusing of his actions in giving Phaethon the chariot on the grounds that he had to do it, or bemoaning of fate as we do, to take just a few examples, in the cases of: *Procris* (7.828), who, hearing a tale of Cephalus’ unfaithfulness, bemoans her cruel fate; *Atalanta* (10.632-5), who bemoans her fortune and says that if the fates did not deny her marriage, she should have Hippomenes; *Venus* (10.724), whose beloved Adonis had just died, reproaches fate for killing him; and *Ulysses* (13.131-2), who calls the fates which killed Achilles “unjust”.

⁴¹ Further to this, strong evidence that the keeping of such an oath is a choice, rather than some sort of metaphysical restriction, can be found by comparing similar cases of the gods’ limitations, such as their supposed inability to undo the work of another god. Here, the restrictions on the gods are ones of permission, rather than possibility. As in the issue of oaths by the Styx, the verb “*licet*” is key when considering the ability of the gods to undo each others’ work. Although it is not unequivocally ruled out that some external determining force is at work in the situations where we are told that gods cannot undo the work of another, I do not believe that there is any genuine evidence within the text to support this, and so, such an idea must remain a mere hypothesis. Like Phoebus’ words about his oath to the Styx, in both examples of such a rule found in the *Metamorphoses* (3.336-7 and 14.784-5), the word “*licet*” is present. As with oaths by the Styx, from the uses of the verb “*licet*” here and throughout the poem, I tend to translate it in both of these cases as “permitted.” Note that it is starkly contrasted with the “they are not able” “*non possunt*” of Jupiter’s words about the gods’ inability to contravene the decrees of the Fates at 15.780-1.

Similar evidence comes when we are told that the gods are not *permitted* (“*licet*”) to be seen shedding tears by mortals (e.g. *The Raven & The Crow*, 2.621-2) – a concept stemming back at least as far as Euripides (e.g. *Hippolytus*, 1396), but which is never explained in the *Metamorphoses* and treated almost comically by Ovid. As Anderson (1997) notes, “The tearless nature of the gods often receives Ovid’s comment, most often when we would expect a god to show sympathy with human troubles” (p.308). Instead they give this excuse and show very little evidence of being truly moved by the situation. Again the word “*licet*” is present.

Phoebus' character to this point can be summarised as follows: he is a good, caring, considerate father, who genuinely loves his son and who treats him with extreme consideration, despite his son's character. He is also eloquent in speech, demonstrates his rationality in his speeches of dissuasion, and is not generally given to following his emotions alone. Moreover, he shows his inclination to act according to certain fixed principles, such as unquestioning and unconditional love for his son of questionable merit, and is one who puts his moral principles above even his highest personal values – in the keeping of his word once given, even when the consequence is the inevitable loss of his son's life.

After Phaethon's death, Phoebus' character undergoes a significant change. He too now acts on emotion alone – having completely resigned himself to grief – and here shows some of the same self-centredness found in Phaethon's character. The words “and he gives over his mind into mourning and adds anger to his sorrows and denies his *duty* to the world” “*datque animum in luctus et luctibus adicit iram/ officiumque negat mundo*” (2.384-5) suggest that Phoebus has a *duty* to others and is therefore being selfish (rather than self-less as he is expected to be)⁴² in throwing aside his obligations as the Sun god on account of grief. This is presented as stemming from an entirely *personal* loss,⁴³ and which is at this point regarded by Phoebus (or so it is implied) as being more important to himself than the wishes/good of the rest of the world's inhabitants.

Phoebus is thus a prime representative of another type of character found in the *Metamorphoses*: that which I label the *part-time emotionalist*. These are the characters who, although clearly not approaching morality subjectively at first (i.e. not prone to action driven by emotion alone), after being overcome by a certain emotion or passion, then act completely subjectively. There are a large number of such characters, and the emotion that overcomes them is sometimes set upon them by a god, and at other times it appears to be an element of their innate mind-body dichotomy (discussed presently) which, when the emotional side is activated, takes over completely. Whatever the cause, because they have what is in effect a Jekyll and Hyde personality – depending on whether they are under the influence of extreme

⁴² At least according to the gods, as is seen by their reaction to Phoebus' subsequent negation of his duties.

⁴³ This, as will be discussed further presently, is evidence that as Ovid presents it, acting in self-interest is linked with acting on emotion. This is also evidenced by the fact that it is Phoebus' initial desire to please his son, who is a major value to him, which makes him make his rash promise.

emotion – it is only right that they should be treated as having a non-subjectivist character at one point and a subjectivist one at another.⁴⁴

Fränkel (1956), describing Phoebus' situation, notes that in refusing to continue his job as the Sun after Phaethon's death, he infringes "on the laws of nature for personal and emotional reasons" (p.87). Glenn (1986), speaking of the general issue of the changes emotion for a value can bring on a character, comments "Human nature often prevents pious behaviour... Romantic love confounds familial piety... bestial love subverts it... Indeed, love of one's family or one's country, which should sustain piety, seems as nothing before Venus and Cupid..." (p.214). The important point here is that, as it is depicted, while one may be dutiful and pious, when the forces of love or strong emotion are active, duty and piety cannot compete as they are conscious choices, whereas love and one's emotions are not.

Evaluation of characters

Following from the main points of the characterisation and the examination of the main characters' motivations for their words and actions through their key decisions, let us progress to the evaluation of these characters presented in the text. That is, whether or not characters and their words, actions and motivations are clearly deliberately given a predominantly favourable or sympathetic presentation by the internal narrator and the internal characters who are presented as having true/ reliable grasp on the nature of reality (i.e. how the metaphysic and epistemology and ethics of how the *Metamorphoses*' universe works),

⁴⁴ As further examples, we can list the following as acting subjectively at one time but not another: *Tereus*, as implied by the description of his state of mind at 6.465, "there is nothing he would not do or dare, captured by this lust," "*et nihil est quod non effreno captus amore/ ausit*," i.e. now, after being overcome by passion, which is said to be a natural part of his character "*innata libido*," (6.458), he is subjective – thus anything goes; *Hippomenes*, who criticises those who pursue Atalanta under penalty of death, calling them "*nimios... amores*," (10.577), yet when he sees her, he too is smitten and does the same; the same goes for *Atalanta* in the story of her race with Hippomenes, in which Venus, directly influencing her, entices her away by a passion for apples. This god-sent emotion also applies to both characters' final act of impiety inside Cybele's temple; *Hercules* (9.211ff), having been overcome by emotion, (in the agony of death), throws the innocent Lichas off a cliff in the assumption that he is guilty of aiding and abetting Hercules' murder; *Circe*, having seen and heard Glaucus, during whose story the issue with part-time emotionalists is basically stated by the narrator when he says: "for no one has a disposition more apt to such flames, whether the cause of this be within herself, or whether Venus made her this way as a payment for having been offended by her father" "*neque enim flammis habet aptius ulla/ talibus ingenium, seu causa est huius in ipsa,/ seu Venus indicio facit hoc offensa paterno*" (14.25-7). These characters are again different from those who consciously *choose* to act on their emotions, discussed in the following chapter.

and whether or not this is consistent with the evaluation implied by characters' respective fates and the reason for them.

Whether or not the presentation of the main characters, their actions, and their subsequent fates are explicitly or implicitly positive or negative is important in identifying the story's explicit themes, and will become useful in examining the overall philosophical outlook on life implied by the poem.

The evaluation of Phaethon within the poem seems to be mostly negative. He is said to be foolish both in the eyes of the narrator and Phoebus,⁴⁵ and his faults stem from his emotionalism and his consequently excessive self-interest. Both of these are presented negatively throughout the *Metamorphoses* (both explicitly by the narrator and implicitly by the negative results to which these are shown to lead, and are discussed below). Moreover, he is shown to come to his death through his actions, which directly result from his emotionalistic character. Although he has redeeming attributes in the eyes of the narrator, such as his (at least superficial) care for his mother and sisters (1.762-4), and is never actually shown to deliberately do anything represented as wicked, he is certainly not drawn in as sympathetic a light as he could have been, particularly with regard to the manner of in which his death is depicted. As Anderson (1997) observes, the light-hearted nature of his death scene, and the overly rhetorical language used to draw the reader's focus away from Phaethon to the narrator is a great anti-climax to what has preceded. "Ovid does not want us to wallow in tears for Phaethon. Distance from the boy at this fatal moment means that we will not identify with his grieving relatives and friends below" (p.263). Similarly, noting the absence of a traditional lamentation speech by Clymene, Anderson asserts that "In sparing his audience, the narrator also makes sure that we do not hear any convincingly sympathetic regret for Phaethon" (p.265). As a whole, the presentation is one of indifference to both Phaethon's character and his fate.

Phoebus on the other hand, is given a more sympathetic treatment. While, at the end of the story, the other gods openly disapprove of his refusal to continue driving his chariot across the heavens, it is notable that this is the only aspect of his actions that receives explicit or implicit criticism. His love for his son (despite the youth's apparent unworthiness), which is

⁴⁵ Phoebus, wondering at Phaethon's complete and instantaneous disregard of every argument and warning, and utter oblivion to the dangers, notes his foolishness (2.100) – a sentiment earlier expressed by Epaphus (1.753-4). Note also the similar implications of "*nescius*" (2.58), and "*male optatos ... inscius*" (2.148).

associated with his ruinous promise, is passed over as acceptable – presumably because love for one's family members, irrespective of their apparent value or worth, is presented throughout the *Metamorphoses* as an intrinsically moral duty,⁴⁶ and emotions are presented as out of one's control (see 5. *Theme*). Phoebus' keeping of his oath is also tacitly accepted – something consistent with the fact that the altruistic action of upholding one's oath once given, despite the consequences, is again presented as intrinsically moral. In both cases, Phoebus is depicted as being caught in a trap by external factors outside his control: the emotions which caused him to make his promise; and an intrinsic duty not of his own choosing, and blatantly opposed to his emotions, that restricts him in a moral sense from saving his son.⁴⁷ Thus it is only logical that he should be treated as free from blame for the negative consequences of these actions, and can be sympathised with at the loss of his beloved son. This explains why the only part of Phoebus' behaviour that is treated negatively by narrator or internal characters is that he let his love for his son carry him away to the extent of resigning from his duty. This is consistent with the negative view of self-interest depicted throughout the poem (see 6. *Overall Philosophical Outlook*). Finally, we see evidence for explicitly positive aspect of Phoebus' evaluation by implication of his portrayal as a predominantly rational thinker, in contrast to Phaethon, who is an emotionalist.

In summary, Phoebus, unlike his ill-fated son, is shown in a predominantly positive and sympathetic light. His judgement during his conversation with his son is given all the appearance of adhering implicitly with the philosophical ideas inherent in the text. However, just as in the case of Phaethon, it is his actions, stemming from his character, that facilitate the loss of his son and bring upon him all the grief and scorn he later incurs. Thus he is also presented as an imperfect character, and the overall impression given is again one of indifference.⁴⁸

One further point of interest drawn from the above and which will be discussed in greater depth later, and is consistent throughout the *Metamorphoses*, is the fact that the characters are not presented in depth. In-depth explanations are not provided as to why characters have

⁴⁶ Treated like an immutable and unquestionable law of nature, which should be followed no matter what the context or consequences. This is discussed in depth in 6. *Overall Philosophical Outlook*.

⁴⁷ Although the choice is ultimately up to Phoebus, it is presented *as if* it were out of his hands. The keeping of one's word despite the context or consequences is implied to be perfectly justifiable, *if* it is accepted that one has a moral mandate to adhere to certain duties, values, actions, as intrinsic.

⁴⁸ Anderson (1997), p.234, says "By viewing all this pathos coolly from a distance, the poet makes sure that we do not identify with either characters."

certain emotions – or what views or value-judgements lie at their base – other than those that are immediately presented. For example, Phaethon's own stated reasons for committing his actions are given, but we never learn why he has *these* emotions and value-judgements – he merely seems to have been born with them. Again in the case of Phoebus, we see that he holds some morals and values as intrinsically valid (discussed below), but what premises he holds that cause him to accept as valid that which he takes to be intrinsic are never revealed. Likewise Ovid does not depict psychological introspection on behalf of the characters. We get a semblance of this in a handful of characters who are given monologues of significant length to express their internal conflicts, but even these are not presented as querying the source of their values and emotions, or examining the fundamental principles upon which they act. Rather, they are depicted using deductive rationalisation as to how they should act in accordance with these already accepted values and emotions.⁴⁹

5. Theme

Having examined the story's essential conflict, the actions which enact it, and the characters necessary to enact these actions, we may proceed to examine the themes explicit in their results, and the reasons why these are as they are.

What does it mean (if anything) that the character of Phaethon – drawn as one who has no conception of principles, reason, context or consequences of his actions, and who acts on whatever emotions come to him in any given situation – ends up attempting something far beyond his capabilities, bringing himself into deadly conflict with the gods, and causing misery and destruction throughout the earth as a consequence? Similarly, what does it mean that a father, who loves his son unquestionably, but who values certain principles above all else – and despite the context – ends up losing his highest personal values and thereby facilitating the aforementioned destruction? The answers to such questions will enable us to subsequently determine the philosophical framework necessarily inherent implicitly within the work which allows the themes expressed in it to exist.

⁴⁹ Generally on this topic, see Glenn (1986), p.11; Stephens (1957), p.84; Solodow (1988), pp.132, and 155-6; and Wheeler (2000). I discuss this at length when we come to the character of Scylla, and again with Althaea.

First though, for the sake of clarity, it will help to take the key elements of the story as given above and combine them into a single statement from which to proceed. This statement is the story's plot-theme – the essence of the action situation,⁵⁰ the results of which and the reasons for these constitute the themes explicitly expressed by the story's conflict, actions, characters, and the means by which this is all integrated.

The plot-theme of *Phaethon* is as follows: *An emotionalistic youth tries to obtain a public proof of his parentage, by insisting on an oath-given favour from his loving father, who knows it means his son's death.* Here we have an accurate description of the essential participants in this story's central conflict, their motivations, the values at stake for each, and an explanation of why they come into conflict.

The main conflict here is between a youth and his father. What occurs does so on account of Phaethon's emotionalistic character, the extent to which Phoebus loved his son, and Phoebus' blind pursuit of a principle in spite of the context and consequences. Phaethon's emotionalism is expressed in his desire to ride his father's chariot in the face of all rational argument and looming deadly consequences. His father's love is expressed through the instantaneous making of his promise, and Phoebus' valuing of a principle above all else is seen through him permitting his son to die rather than go back on his word. The outcome is that Phaethon attempts something far beyond his capabilities – that brings with it certain death and destruction – and Phoebus loses that which is of greatest personal value to himself. Misery and destruction cover the earth as a further consequence.

In the case of Phaethon's emotionalism, the result is presented as a thoroughly logical one, and the thematic reasons for this are important. The chief factors here are the representation of emotion as destructive, and emotion and reason as opposites. Phaethon impulsively follows his emotions. Thus, he does not consider the context or consequences of his actions, and is portrayed as acting against all reason, seemingly oblivious to the possible dangers. Consequently, Phaethon not only brings himself into conflict with both nature and the gods, but brings destruction upon others, as well as on himself.

We also see the contrast between emotion and reason in some of Phoebus' actions. For example, his initial fatal promise to Phaethon is made unthinkingly, on the spur of the

⁵⁰ Put another way, it is the action situation into which the central conflict is integrated, "the focus of the means of presenting the theme," Rand (2000), p.17.

moment, as an emotional reaction to Phaethon's presence and request. The promise is rash and is almost instantly regretted. The irreconcilable division between reason and emotion is then emphasised in a striking way. Phoebus' initial emotional action (his promise) eventually causes him to go against his emotions (in letting his beloved son die). His reason tells him to carry on (to keep his oath) and act contrarily to what reason would under normal circumstances decree (the preservation of his son's life). The inclusion in this story of Phoebus' oath by the Styx is important, because it seems to force, or at least strongly encourage, Phoebus to carry his initial decision through to its logical conclusion, despite perceiving the inexorable ruin entailed by such a course of action.⁵¹ Thus the conflict between a character's emotional and rational sides – that feelings and considered thoughts point in different directions – is emphasised in the form of love versus duty. Again, later on in the story, it is on account of being overcome by emotion (that of grief for the loss of his son) that Phoebus resigns from his job as the Sun, heedless of his duty "*officium*" (2.385) to the world, the wishes of the gods and the impact of his decision upon the earth's inhabitants. After some time, and following the persuasions of the other gods, he changes his mind and returns to driving the chariot of the sun – a completely opposite course of action to that first suggested by his emotions.⁵²

This leads to another point that will become more significant later – the depiction of emotion as highly likely to lead to selfishness, and selfishness as always linked with acting on emotion. For example, in Phaethon's initial self-promotion and then in his fixation with a public display of his parentage, and in his insistence on a ride in his father's chariot despite all potential consequences, we have seen: that the values he seeks are of a solely self-interested nature; that they include no consideration for others; and that his actions and words

⁵¹ It is interesting to note the lines of Merops' in Euripides' play *Phaethon*, which run "I consider this among the follies of mortals, whoever hands over his patrimony to his sons while they are not thinking straight," "*ἐν τοῖσι μύροις τοῦτ' ἐγὼ κρίνω θροῶν, / ὅστις πατρῶια παισὶ μὴ φρονοῦσιν εὖ ... παραδίδωσ'*" (160-2). Since Ovid's version of the myth shows considerable evidence of being influenced by Euripides' play (see Diggle, 1970, pp.180-200), I think it more than possible that Ovid had these words in mind when constructing Phoebus' part in the story, and maybe even motivated him to construct a situation in which such an action could be unavoidable, and to demonstrate the consequent results. If we accept such Euripidean influence, it is no surprise that Ovid's Phaethon is characterised in the mould of the self-destructive young men that we often find in Euripides (compare for instance the latter's Pentheus or Hippolytus).

⁵² As an interesting side note, Cicero (*De Off.* 3.94), mentioning this myth, says the promise was not morally binding as it was not in the son's benefit. I think it likely that Ovid had a similar view, since he included the oath by the Styx to show Phoebus' upholding of his promise in a more sympathetic light, although admittedly, Phoebus is still portrayed as acting later on as if he had been in control of his actions and is criticised for this. Ovid seems to be trying to have it both ways, but also present Phoebus in both a sympathetic light and in contrast his character to that of Phaethon.

are consistently impulsive. Phoebus too is shown to be acting in a self-interested way when he rashly offers the choice of a favour to his son without taking into consideration the possible consequences for themselves or others – an action stemming from the emotions of the moment and personal value for his son. We again see the same disregard for the consequences for others when Phoebus goes on strike from sun-duty purely through personal grief; a fact emphasised by the gods' words and actions that come as an immediate result.

In the above cases, we see misery and destruction resulting from emotion-based action, and as such action equates to a subjective approach to morality. As observed earlier, the logical destruction of such an approach is implied as a general principle. Indeed, it is a key aspect of a subjective approach to morality – the failure to consider context, consequences, or the morality of an action – that is presented as making one blind to reality and the laws of both god and man, and so leads to negative outcomes for the majority of those who act accordingly.

Following on from this, and relevant to what happens to Phoebus, is the representation that the holding strong values – especially personal values – in fact markedly *increases* a character's chances of having an unhappy or unsuccessful life, or arriving at a negative fate. That is, it is due to the extent to which characters hold their values – whatever they may be, whether rational or irrational – that their destruction comes. This is an important factor in a number of the *Metamorphoses*' stories. In the story of Phaethon, it is not merely his desire to take his father's chariot for a ride that leads to his ruin, but how desperately he wants to do so. Had he not been so passionate, and submitted to an alternative, he would not have persisted in his course of action regardless of reason and all warnings of the consequences, and would not have come into conflict so fatally with the laws of nature and the gods as a result. Again in the case of Phoebus, it is specifically because of the extent of his affection for his son, that he made the promise that resulted in the loss of his son.⁵³ Similarly, had his affection been less, he would not have grieved so much at the death of his son and thus been overcome by emotion and consideration of self over duty. Finally, if Phoebus had not been so firmly resolved to keep his oath in spite of the circumstances, he could have avoided the

⁵³ As Otis (1970) puts it "It was Phoebus' amatory and paternal sentiments, his ridiculous promise and oath, that had caused all the trouble" (p.116). Similarly, Anderson (1997) states that "The father's rashness allows the rash son to ask for what will inevitably cause his own death" (p.226); and Bass (1977) that "The tragedy of the situation is that it is he who, through his zeal to confirm Phaethon's parentage and to dispel his anxiety on this count, is directly responsible for his son's death" (p.407).

consequences, which were deadly to his son, heart-breaking for himself, and devastating for the earth's population.

All of the above themes are further expressed and emphasised through the minor conflicts which stem from and are tangential to the main conflict, and are scattered throughout the story. This also reinforces the relationship with, and integration of the minor conflicts with the main one. For example:

Phaethon v. Tellus & Juppiter. Phaethon, by driving and losing control of his father's chariot comes into conflict with Tellus who (along with her inhabitants and lands) has been burned, and thereby directly into conflict with Juppiter. Here again we see selfishness, in the form of Phaethon's selfish choice to ride the chariot, presented as bringing destruction – not only his own destruction, but that of the earth and its inhabitants too. The selfish aspect of Phaethon's action is further emphasised here in the speech of Tellus to Juppiter, in which she beseeches him to think of the safety of everything (2.300) and put a stop to Phaethon. She proceeds to entreat Juppiter to consider others and, if not them, himself (note that she puts the others first) (2.290-4). Juppiter takes action and has all the gods witness that what he is doing is for the good of *all* (2.304-6). The implication again is that consideration for others should come above personal values.

Juppiter & the gods v. Phoebus. This conflict originates from Phoebus' resignation of his duties as bearer of the sun across the earth. Phoebus is in mourning and goes on strike due to the ill that has been done – in his opinion, unfairly – to his son (2.384-93). On the other hand, Juppiter desires to restore order and bring light to the earth. In this conflict, emotion is again equated with selfishness. Phoebus, by allowing himself to be overcome by emotion in grieving for a lost personal value and consequently neglecting everything else, acts in a selfish way. He nevertheless finally forsakes his grief and gives in to the prayers of the other gods (with some threats from Juppiter thrown in, 2.394-6), taking up his chariot, and once again bringing light to the world.

It should not be forgotten that the inclusion of this particular ending, the final scene with Phoebus and the gods, is not pure whim on Ovid's part. There is no evidence that any pre-Ovidian version of the myth contained Phoebus' one-day resignation from driving on account of his grief. This suggests that Ovid specifically chose to treat this issue in this way to portray the logical consequences of a situation such as Phoebus' inner conflict between his

love for his son and the keeping of his oath. Consider the great thematic difference if Ovid had, instead of giving Phoebus' reasons for his actions as anger stemming from his *emotions*, grief and resentment (2.384-93), constructed his story such that Phoebus did not drive for a day because it was a custom of mourning, or because his car was being mended, and showing the chosen reason as being fair and proper and sanctioned by the other gods.

Finally, as mentioned above, the themes of emotion being linked with selfishness, and selfishness being likely to bring misery, are present in the stories of Phaethon's sisters (2.340-66), and that of his friend Cynus (2.367-80). All of these characters' actions show that they value Phaethon highly and he, by his actions and death, comes into indirect conflict with all of them thereby. The Heliades are shown as giving themselves over to emotion through perpetually mourning Phaethon and in their subsequent separation (through transformation) from participation in normal human life. The link between emotion and acting selfishly is emphasised by the fact that it is for their *personal loss* that they are in a state of grief. The case of Cynus is similar. His grief is associated with a the loss of a personal value, and it is due to this that he deserts his kingdom and people – a particularly selfish action – and wanders aimlessly, weeping alone until similarly transformed, this time into a swan.

The narrator's statement at the beginning of the tale of the Heliades is also worthy of mention – that they shed tears in a *vain* tribute to the dead "*inania morti/ munera, dant lacrimas*" (2.340-1). While it is perhaps most obvious to take "*inania*" as describing the inability of the sisters' tears to bring back the dead, if it is read in light of the several other examples in the poem where those who mourn excessively come to a negative fate as a consequence, then it could also imply criticism on the narrator's part for the nature and extent of the mourning.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Anderson (1997), "the reader can decide whether this is sympathetic or ironic" (p.226). The transformation or dissolution of incessantly weeping characters is common in the *Metamorphoses* and thus implies that the latter is the case and that this is to be seen as a negative, since it ties into the idea that setting too much store by personal values (i.e. being selfish) opens one up to a sticky ending. For example, consider the fates of *Hyrie* (7.380-1); *Byblis* (9.655-65); *Canens* (14.428-32); *Egeria* (15.547-551); and one we will discuss shortly – *Cyane* (5.425-37). Also, compare the "*lacrimae volvuntur inanes*" of Vergil's Dido (*Aen.* 4.449). There is certainly no irony in this example, although Dido is most markedly another character who would not have come to such a miserable end had she not loved so much.

I should take a moment to make the distinction between the narrating voice and that of Ovid, I do not take them as the same thing and therefore do not take the narrator's statements as necessarily authorial ones. Rather, I take the internal narrator as in effect another character that Ovid uses as a means of presenting his stories and a tool for making them come across in a certain way. Consequently Ovid can, by removing himself from his manner of presentation, subtly emphasize a particular viewpoint or evaluation of a situation by having them explicitly stated by the narrator. I discuss the evaluations of the narrating voice further in *Scylla*.

Regardless of the interpretation of this detail, in both of the above cases we once again see the theme of excessive value being destructive. The characters of Cynus and the Heliades come to miserable ends not because they felt sadness at the loss of Phaethon, but because their grief was overwhelming and, it is implied, excessive in the context. Clymene too, if she had not held such strong personal value for Phaethon, would have felt less grief at his death.⁵⁵

6. Overall Philosophical Outlook

Let us now move to an examination of what this story's events, its characters, their actions, their subsequent fates, the reasons why they are as they are, and the themes made explicit through these reasons, can reveal about the fundamentals of the philosophical outlook inherent in the text. Specifically, let us identify the ideas that are present in the realms of metaphysics, and epistemology and ethics, which make it necessary for the characters portrayed to have the endings that they do given the contexts in which they are placed, and allow the themes discussed above to exist.

Firstly, both the depiction of reason and emotion as being opposites (presented in two different ways in the cases of Phaethon and Phoebus), and the depiction of emotion-based action logically resulting in misery and destruction, are based on a broader underlying philosophical factor. Ovid's characters, both mortal and immortal, are embodiments of a dichotomy between two opposing factors inherent in their metaphysical makeup, which can broadly be termed as mind and body – reason and emotion – both of which pull in opposite directions and neither of which is reconcilable with the other.⁵⁶ Because of this, when a character follows their emotions, they are not likely to consider the context, consequences, or morality of their actions, and are almost always portrayed as acting against reason and in spite of the possible dangers. Such characters, therefore, are not only likely to bring themselves into conflict with the laws of man, the gods, and nature, but to bring destruction

⁵⁵ These factors, I believe, explain the observation of Galinsky (1975) that "the excess grief of Phaethon's father, mother and sisters (2.239-62) which is too overdone to be touching" (p.135). Indeed, to be touching is not the object, but to show the tragic fault of such excess.

⁵⁶ A mind-body dichotomy may be expressed in several forms, such as reason versus emotion, body v. soul, action v. thought, fantasy v. reality, the moral v. practical or expedient, but they are all a reflection of the same essential internal conflict of two opposing forces which cannot be integrated, one pertaining to the body (the physical part) and one to the mind (one's consciousness). As we will see throughout this study, Ovid's characters are drawn with two inherent, contradictory and yet inseparable sides, which pull them in different directions.

upon others as well as themselves unknowingly. We have seen this both in the character of Phaethon – who naturally follows his whims and emotions, against all reason – and in the character of Phoebus, whose impulse causes him to make a rash, unthinking, unreasonable promise, the negative consequences of which he recognises almost instantaneously.

The fact that the characters' inability to integrate their rational and emotional sides, is inherent in their very metaphysical makeup and therefore a factor outside their control, is emphasised by the consistent presentation of emotions as primaries; feelings which are not traceable to a more fundamental cause, and do not presuppose choice of values or value-judgements, but rather, are their progenitors. This helps explain the lack of depth in the main characters' characterisations observed earlier; if a character's fate, actions, or character are determined because they are at the mercy of causeless emotions, then there is no need to delve into a character's inner psychology or present their most fundamental motivations. Indeed, there is no reason why there should be broad underlying principles which govern their actions. Phaethon is a typical example. He is presented as one who seems to have been born with an innate tendency to act on emotion through all his key decisions, and there is nothing he can do about it. The dichotomy this entails is present throughout the *Metamorphoses* and we will come across it in each story examined in depth.⁵⁷

This concept of characters being at the mercy of emotions outside their understanding or control and which are not determined by their character or choices, brings up another concept implied by Ovid's treatment of the *Phaethon* myth; that of determinism. This is a concept implied (but, as will see, not usually stressed) in various different aspects of the poem. Determinism is the idea that characters' fates are not directed by their own choices and actions but determined by factors – either internal or external – outside their understanding or control, such as the gods, fates, their own emotions (as above), or character-traits with which they were born.⁵⁸ It is the idea that there is something inherent in one's own nature, or in that of reality, that makes one's success or happiness in life beyond one's control. Note that this

⁵⁷ See Farrell (1999), p.128, who mentions the clash of mind and body in the poem and discusses the poet and artist figures as particularly representing this dichotomy; Theodorakopoulos (1999), p.152, who discusses how the complete separation of spirit/ mind and body is emphasised in the poem's various apotheoses; and Wheeler (2000), p.150; Solodow (1988), pp.191-2; and Stephens (1957), pp.37ff, on the same topic.

⁵⁸ When using the term "determinism" I do not necessarily mean that Ovid believes that his characters' every word, action, and fate is predetermined by some force outside their control, only that certain elements within themselves or in nature will always have the potential to influence them unwillingly. For example, as we will see, although there is a large element of determinism implicit in the poem, it is rarely portrayed in the form of characters' lacking the ability to make choices. However, the emotions and values these choices are based on, or whether these are effective in reality, is another matter.

does not cover hindrances such as disease, natural disaster or bad luck, as these are not factors depicted as necessarily present in a character's nature or that of the surrounding universe.

In addition to its implicit presence in the presentation of characters' metaphysical makeup, the idea of determinism is made explicit through the presence of a hierarchy of forces within the universe Ovid depicts, many of which have the power to control and determine the destinies of characters lower in the hierarchy. The basic aspect of this is the superiority of gods over men which, although largely absent from this tale, is present in the form of Phaethon's metaphysical inefficacy in comparison to that of the gods. The hierarchy is again implied by the superiority in turn of some divine beings over others. We see this briefly in the form of Juppiter and his law being superior to that of lesser gods and mortals; his control over various aspects of nature (such as lightning) beyond the capability of others; and the fact that Phoebus must submit to the law of Juppiter who, as we hear from Tellus, is supreme among gods (2.280). The overall implication of this hierarchy is that one's interaction with reality is not necessarily rational or predictable, because there are superior powers in the universe who have power over nature and nature's laws and can interfere seemingly out of the blue, like the lightning bolt that struck Phaethon.

Even more significant examples of characters' fates being outside their control can be found in references to the Fates, whose determining influence in the *Phaethon* story is most notably suggested by the sentence "and now he looks forward to the west, which it is his fate not to touch, and at other times he looks back to the east" "*et modo quos illi fatum contingere non est/ prospicit occasus, interdum respicit ortus*" (2.189-90). That this has in fact come about through the will of the Fates has already been revealed to the reader earlier in the poem: "he [Juppiter] also remembered that it was among the things fated that there would be a time when the sea and land and the unassaulted kingdom of the heavens would burn and the besieged foundations of the world would suffer" "*esse quoque in fatis reminiscitur adfore tempus/ quo mare, quo tellus correptaque regia caeli/ ardeat et mundi moles obsessa laboret*" (1.256-8). The power of the Fates is again mentioned as relevant at 2.156, and 2.304-6.

In sum, the characters Ovid presents do not have control over their fates, no matter what their actions, and they are in constant peril of being overrun by their emotions, or falling victim to the caprice of higher powers. To borrow the words of Vergil's Evander, the implication of all

these stories is that individual characters are in effect at the mercy of “all-powerful Fortune and inescapable fate” “*Fortuna omnipotens et ineluctabile fatum*” (*Aen.* 8.333-5).⁵⁹ This view is further confirmed by being stated explicitly by the internal narrating voice (2.156, 189-90).⁶⁰

Returning to the hierarchy of forces, I should say a few words on the presentation of the gods in the *Metamorphoses*, who are employed in a variety of ways. These range from inspiration for poets (e.g. 10.148, 15.622) and causes for metamorphoses, to the depiction of the gods themselves as significant characters in a large majority of these myths. This topic has received considerable attention from previous scholars, and most of what I have to add will come in the next chapter, but for the moment I should like to highlight one important aspect of their presentation which we will see throughout these analyses. For all the gods’ power, immortality, indestructibility, omnipotence and loftiness, they are generally treated much like super-humans, and their difference from man is primarily to do with the scale of their metaphysical limitations. Even if their exact nature and actions are almost wholly unfathomable to humans, they are portrayed emotionally, intellectually and even physically, and in their interactions amongst themselves and with mortals, in a particularly human way. In terms of morality and their epistemological approach to ethics, they are comparable to

⁵⁹ For the uses of “*Fortuna/ fortuna*” in the *Metamorphoses*, see the *Concordances* of Defarrari, Barry, and McGuire (1939).

⁶⁰ Apart from the instances found in the stories examined in detail in the course of this thesis, and the references to the Fates’ power being above even the gods (discussed in the next chapter), further examples of stories in which Ovid advances the idea of superior powers (other than the gods) determining destiny in advance include those of: *Cadmus* (3.1-130, 4.563-603, in which Phoebus’ oracle reveal the future to Cadmus, 3.10-13; a voice prophesies his future to him, 3.98; when it is stated by the narrator that his fate pressed him, 4.566-7; and finally 4.571-5, where Cadmus, reviewing the misfortunes of their house, questions whether what has occurred has been due to the influence of an external determining agency, something which is answered in the affirmative and which thus implicitly undercuts the free-will of everything that has happened between his meeting the serpent and this point in the story); *Actaeon* (3.131-252, where the “*fata*” are the cause of his wandering into Diana’s grove, 176); *Teiresias* (3.316-38, a story which is segued from that preceding it by the words “*Dumque ea per terras fatali lege geruntur,*” 316, and is concluded with Juppiter giving Teiresias the power to know the future, 338); *The Daughters of Minyas* (4.1-54, where a priest prophesies Bacchus’ retribution, 8-9); *Narcissus & Echo* (3.339-510, where Narcissus’ fate is prophesied accurately, 346-8); *Pentheus & Bacchus* (3.513-87, in which Teiresias again prophesies accurately, 517-25); *Daedalus & Perdix* (8.236-59, in which we are told of Daedalus’ sister, “*fatorum ignara*”); *Erysichthon* (8.725-884, where we hear that the “*fata*” do not allow Ceres and Famine to come together, 784-5); *Dryope* (9.324-93, in which we are told that she was ignorant of the fates, 336, which are cruel, 359); *Atalanta & Hippomenes* (10.560-707, in which an oracles tells Atalanta to steer clear of husbands, although she will never be able to, 564-6); *Peleus* (11.346-409, where it is suggested that Peleus’ fates were predetermined, 407-8); *The Greeks at Aulis* (12.1-38, in which the future is told accurately by an augur, 19-20); *Acis, Galatea & Polyphemus* (13.740-897, where Polyphemus’ fate is prophesied accurately, 772-3); *Tages* (15.552-9, a story about one who could speak the fates – what the future would be); and *Cipus* (15.565-621, in which Cipus is told vaguely about the consequences of his horns by a seer – 15.577-85).

mortals, and are also to a large extent comparable in the type of their metaphysical restrictions – such as having the same inner dichotomy between mind and body, and being subject to both the powers of love and the Fates. It is primarily the scale that differs. The fact that they are able to influence man's emotions and even change the laws of nature is obviously not comparable, but the fact that their emotions too are subject to such a change, and their control over nature and metaphysics is restricted, brings them back into a comparable sphere. In this regard they are, as Otis (1970) points out, "only thinly-disguised men and women" (p.145). This point is often highlighted by Ovid, as we have seen (particularly in the character of Phoebus), and will see frequently as we examine these tales.⁶¹

As we will see in much greater depth in the next story (*Ceres, Dis & Proserpina*), the power of the Fates is another level in the hierarchy, being a force even above the gods. Just as Phoebus' inability to save Phaethon (in a physical sense) demonstrates the metaphysical limits of the gods, so are forces such as the Fates often used by Ovid to present the limits of the gods' powers. Although Juppiter may be able to hurl thunderbolts and create floods, and Phoebus himself controls the sun, the gods are only metaphysically efficacious up to a point. They may be able to alter the laws of nature in certain situations, but not always.

Another issue which comes up in *Phaethon* and its subplots, and which is linked to the idea of determinism, is the fact that even characters who act on emotion and bring destruction to themselves, and others are not criticised too harshly. The link here is in the presentation of emotions as a determining agency outside the understanding or control of individual characters. As they are not ultimately responsible for their emotions or for what results, severe criticism of the characters who commit action based on emotion becomes effectively pointless. This is consistent with the presentation of both Phaethon and Phoebus.

⁶¹ Even in contests of gods and mortals – gods are drawn with the same weaknesses and flaws as mortals. See Glenn (1986), whose book observes countless cases of Ovid calling the stature, augustness, authority, efficacy, and power of the gods into question, using various techniques, summing up that Ovid's "treatment of them is too urbane and carefree to be serious and completely honorific. He stresses their imperfections, their weaknesses, their errors and strayings, not their aloof grandeur, their unerring rightness, or the monumental nature of their benefactions... Most of his technique for doing so is his making the gods very human, though very powerful, so that their frailties seem natural and inevitable" (pp.222-3); and Newlands (2005), who perhaps says it best when she notes that "the gods in love are reduced to often comically human dimensions... Yet the gods are not always successful... The sometimes comic ineptitude of the gods in sexual affairs, their obsession with lust rather than with justice or with war, draws the gods down misleadingly, as it turns out, to a human level... the anthropomorphic behaviour of the gods invites the reader to judge them by human standards" (p.486). Similarly see Galinsky (1975), pp.35, 66-7, 162-73; Albrecht (1999); Fyler (1971), pp.197-8; Heinze (1919); Coleman (1971), p.475; Keith (1999), p.239; Due (1974), pp.94ff; Wilkinson (1955) p.192; Otis (1970) pp.341-2; Bernbeck (1967), pp.80-91; and Mack (1988), p.119-20.

However, despite this, these characters' negative endings are not portrayed particularly sympathetically, as one might normally expect if they are out of the respective characters' control. In fact, negative fates in the *Metamorphoses* are rarely treated with sympathy, irrespective of whether or not they are portrayed as deserved. The general impression created is one of indifference to suffering. An example of this is the widespread destruction, death, ruin, and suffering brought about by Phaethon's ride (2.208-71). This is narrated like a shopping list, and the narrator spends far more time itemising the destruction caused by Phaethon than lamenting the negative consequences for those involved or for Phaethon himself. Indeed, after digressing into formal sounding catalogues of the rivers and other geographical locations and features that were affected by the heat, which breaks the continuum of the narrative and detracts from the drama and tragedy of the scene, the narrator proceeds immediately to the semi-comic scene with Tellus. Here, Tellus makes the statement that she can scarce speak because of the smoke, but nevertheless proceeds to rattle on for another 17 lines, in a speech which is overly rhetorical in almost every aspect, and which degrades both the gravity of the situation and Tellus' character by the humorous incongruity of its elements to the situation in which it is set.⁶²

Turning to this story's implications in the realm of epistemology and ethics on the work's overall inherent outlook, we find examples of two different kinds of approach to morality in our two main characters: the subjective approach, and the intrinsic approach, and a particular set of morals and values is associated with each of these.

We have already noted that the character of Phaethon represents an emotionalistic character which, translated into the realm of ethics, means that he approaches morality subjectively. The implicit premise for this type of character is that there is no fixed moral code or set of abstract principles which should guide one's choices and actions, and that such things can be determined by nothing more than what the whim or emotion of the moment inspires. There are a number of this type of character in the *Metamorphoses*, and they have been separated above into consistent subjectivists (emotionalists), such as Phaethon, and part-time subjectivists (emotionalists), such as Phoebus.

We have seen that the actions of those characters who approach morality subjectively (whether consistently or only for a period), because they have no fixed moral code are,

⁶² See Anderson (1997), pp.259-62, who makes some excellent points about this rhetoric and humour and its artistic purposes.

through their relationship to emotion, almost always presented as linked with selfishness and predominantly personal values. Most notably, Phaethon acts as he does because of specific aspects in the nature of his character – his emotionalism and consequent selfishness. We have also seen other characters commit emotional actions that are shown to be linked with similarly self-centred motivations. This is particularly evident in the cases of Cynus (who abandons his city and people) and Phoebus, who resigns from his job as the sun on account of his own personal loss.

It has also been noted that Phaethon comes to his ruin and brings destruction on others through failing to take context or consequences into account when pursuing his values – a key aspect of subjective action.⁶³ Thus a subjective approach to morality is given an implicitly negative presentation through its results leading to misery and destruction. As will be discussed presently, we also see the morals and values associated with this approach given an explicitly negative evaluation by the narrator and internal characters' reactions to them in contrast to other actions, values and moral principles associated with the intrinsic approaches.

While Phoebus could be described at times as an emotionalist during his brief period of grief *after* the loss of Phaethon and until he returns to the sky, more importantly, *before* this he is presented as an exponent of another type of epistemological approach to morality, one that is presented in the *Metamorphoses* as the opposite of the subjective: that which I label the intrinsic approach. Although this approach only plays a small part in this story, it will become more important in later chapters, and so I will take the opportunity to fully discuss it here at the outset.

Characters with an intrinsic approach to morality act as if there is a definite code of morality by which one's life should be guided, which tells one what is right and proper and true, and to whom or what one has a duty. Additionally, these characters appear to hold that such a code is intrinsically set, and is therefore not necessarily in accord with what can be discovered inductively or deductively from perceptual reality. Such a code is therefore neither determined subjectively on emotion, or by independent thought, since its mandates stem from

⁶³ Further examples of the same thing can be found in such cases as those of: *Hippomenes & Atalanta* (10.560-707), who think nothing of the gods when having sex in Cybele's temple; *Icarus* (8.183-235), who irrationally ignores advice and suffers the consequences; *Tereus* (6.412-674), who violates a number of intrinsic duties for which he is later punished; and *Lycaon* (1.163-252), who meets an almost instantaneous demise after trying, irrationally, to defy not only laws regarding hospitality and reverence for the divine (which are depicted as intrinsic), but those of nature too.

powers beyond the individual's understanding and control. Consequently, knowledge of what is intrinsically moral is not induced from observations of life, but can only be innate, self-evident, or derived from authorities. When I use the term "authorities," I refer to figures with knowledge of the intrinsic, whether the gods or fates themselves, or earthbound figures such as priests, seers and prophets. Similarly, this could apply to figures either present or past – such as kings and philosophers, or one's ancestors and notable historical figures and their handed-down directives/ writings, who are taken as having already discovered and validated what is intrinsically moral and just.

An important aspect of the intrinsic approach to morality is that since certain duties, moral stipulations and therefore values and actions are intrinsically mandated, whatever course of action is taken in pursuit of them may (unless stipulated otherwise) be carried out without taking into account the nature and purpose of the action in question – regardless of the context of the situation, potential consequences, or the potential reward or punishment of any involved. On account of this, the characters who hold such a view often appear to act upon particular duties, morals and values, but do so because they hold that they ought, are required, or are duty-bound to do so by some intrinsic code, not because they have discovered and/or validated that it is right to do so by means of their own reason. What is more, they are also usually found pursuing such morals and values in the face of opposing context, consequences, and likely negative outcomes.⁶⁴

The depiction of certain duties, morals, and values as intrinsic, and of some characters as consistently following such intrinsic mandates, is common throughout the *Metamorphoses*. Importantly, as will be shown presently, regardless of the source of a character's intrinsic code of morality, all hold virtually the same types of moral principles, duties, actions, and values as intrinsic, as right and requiring to be held and pursued.

That something is held as intrinsic is most strongly suggested by its relationship to selfishness and emotion. Given that (as discussed above) independence of thought and judgement is depicted throughout the *Metamorphoses* as linked with selfish action and

⁶⁴ See Glenn (1986), p.221, who lists a number of such morals and values (all associated with selfishness, emotion-based action and independence): "Incest, greed, insensitivity, trouble-making, plundering, bestiality, deceit, hardheartedness, breach of hospitality, war, murder, and hubris... Also faulted to varying degrees are the following behaviour patterns: being overly attached to pets, homosexuality, rashness, refusal to accept release from tension, and the desire for the extreme in sexual experience, self-absorption, being other-directed, trying to be what one is not, aggressiveness on the part of the female, refusal to grow up, groundless suspicion of infidelity, excessive grieving, excessive feelings of guilt" (p.221).

emotion, it is by implication therefore, that that which is unselfish and which does not accord with one's emotions is not presented as stemming from independent thought/judgement. Given that the latter is a basic element of an intrinsic approach to morality, it is only logical that what is intrinsic is the opposite of that which is subjective – thus altruistic and often contrary to one's emotions. Consequently, much of which is held as intrinsic is presented through contrast or implication rather than through a statement or explanation to that effect given by the narrator or internal characters. When we see morals, values, principles that are held and oppose those based on emotion and selfishness, and which are pursued regardless of the context and despite clearly visible negative consequences, then these can be considered intrinsic.

In the story of *Phaethon*, a number of values, actions, and particularly moral principles, are intrinsically taken as good, just and moral. For example, it is implied that Phoebus holds as intrinsic the keeping of one's word once given. This is evidenced by the fact that the decision is not an emotional one (because it goes against his emotions). Yet Phoebus seems resolved on this regardless of the context in which the oath was given, and despite the fact that he can tell that the consequences will be unquestionably negative ones. Similarly, we know that the decision is not consciously made through independent value-judgments, as independence is associated with selfishness and personal values. Moreover, it is almost inconceivable that a figure as rational as Phoebus (seen in his extremely logical and reality-based speeches to Phaethon) could think such a decision was for the best, either for himself, Phaethon, or others, knowing the destruction in store, especially if it is not in accord with his emotions. Lastly, that this idea is held intrinsically is evidenced by the fact that the only explanation given as to why he should hold to his word is his statement that it is not permitted "*liceret*" (2.51) to break it (even though this is not presented as a metaphysical impossibility).

Similarly, in the final scene between Phoebus and the other gods, we also see the presentation of the prioritisation of one's duty to others over oneself and one's personal values as an intrinsically moral requirement. We see this by contrast through the presentation of Phoebus' actions as selfish and based on emotion – they stem from emotion associated with grief at a purely *personal* loss. The same intrinsic principle is implied through Tellus' speech to Juppiter, which advocates the sacrifice of oneself and one's personal values on behalf of others and suggests that it is intrinsically good and moral. This is a sentiment supported by

Juppiter's action in response to her words and later (together with the other gods) persuading Phoebus to return to the sky primarily for the sake of others.

These are but a few illustrative examples of morals, values, and actions, upheld, pursued, and committed by characters throughout the *Metamorphoses* in the belief that these are inherently good and moral, and are part of an intrinsically mandated set of rules (or at least guidelines) that should be followed, regardless of the context of the situation, potential consequences, or the potential reward or punishment of those involved.⁶⁵

Generally speaking, the duties and values associated with the intrinsicist approach – including those discussed above – are identical to those which the extant literature from Ovid's era and before (both history and fiction) reveals to have been typically Roman. For example, traditionally accepted as right, moral and just were one's duties to one's superiors, country, city, family – particularly parents and children – and countrymen, all regardless of their respective characteristics or merits and all of which taking precedence over personal values. Additionally, and not least importantly, one had a duty to the gods. Such duties, in

⁶⁵ Further prominent instances of duties, morals and values implied to be intrinsic, and the stories in which they are found, include: selfless love – which I define as value for someone or something not based on self-interest (e.g. in *Deucalion & Pyrrha*, 1.313-415); selflessness in general – lack of self-interest, of value of or pride in oneself, one's qualities, one's attributes, one's capabilities, even to the point of being ashamed of them (implied by the criticism and negative results in reality of the opposite – *self-esteem*, *confidence*, *value of self* – in *Narcissus*, 3.339-510; and through the negative representation of the shade of Achilles in the story about the sufferings of *Hecuba*, 13.429-575); fear and worship of the gods (*Philemon & Baucis*, 8.611-724; the *Aeneas* tales, 13.623-31, 705-39, 14.75-100. He is often described as "*pious*" in pursuing a particular course of action and following a certain principle or value; the story of *The Giants*, 1.151-62); self-sacrifice, the giving up whatever is of value to oneself, or the attainment of one's values, for the sake of others with no likely reward for oneself (*Philemon & Baucis*, 8.611-724; *Agamemnon*, 12.1-38, whose decision to sacrifice his daughter for the good of the fleet is here described as "piety to the public concern" "*pietatem publica causa*"; *Polyxena*, 13.457ff; *The Daughters of Orion*, 13.675-704; *Cipus*, 15.565-621); good treatment of guests (*Philemon & Baucis*, 8.611-724; *The Judgement of Arms*, 13.203; *Hecuba*, with regard to the fate of Polymestor, 13.435-6); piety to one's country and city (*Agamemnon*, 12.1-38; also reemphasised in *The Judgement of Arms*, 13.1-381; *Cipus*, 15.565-621); duty to the gods above all else (implied in Ulysses' speech during *The Judgement of Arms*, 13.185ff); the lives of family members are sacred, no matter what the circumstances (*Romulus*, 14.772-804); and love for one's family, including one's father, spouse, siblings, son, which are described throughout the poem as "duties" and the performing of them "piety" – not as the results of personal value. Broadly speaking, such sentiments are taken to be intrinsic because they are altruistic, and do not stem from self-interest. Regarding the uses of "*pia*," when applied to persons, I take it predominantly to mean "morally upright," and more broadly as in the *O.L.D.* to mean "faithful to one's moral obligations, dutiful, conscientious, upright etc." and when applied to actions in general, to mean anything that is done on principle, without necessary reference to reality or one's own values (consider the stories of *Deucalion & Pyrrha*, 1.313-415; *The Rejuvenation of Aeson*, 7.159-349; *Erigone*, 10.451; *Ceyx & Alcyone*, 11.389-90; *The Judgement of Arms*, 13.191-2, *The Daughters of Anius*, 13.663; *Memnon*, 13.621-2; *Aeneas*, 13.623-31, 705-39; and *Pythagoras'* words concerning the Phoenix, 15.405).

combination with a general attitude of selflessness and detachment from personal values and strong emotions, constituted the backbones of virtue.⁶⁶

Glenn (1986) combines the upholding of the majority of these principles into the term “piety,” defining it (very well I think) as “...minimally, a respect for and sense of obligation to those with whom one ought to be on close terms... Indeed, piety is a particular form of concord, for it consists of observing one’s duties towards one’s parents, relatives and other members of one’s extended family, one’s comrades, one’s native land, and its deities. If one is pious, one will show respect to all of these, and if one is thoroughly pious, one will want to do so. By showing respect and doing one’s duty, one is in harmony with the customs and religion of his country or community, and one is not upsetting one’s parents or relatives. Such behaviour need not entail love, but it is likely that one will feel affection for the members of one’s family and one’s land, especially since piety involves the obligations of parents to children, as well as of children to parents, and if parents take care of children as they should, mutual love will probably develop if it does not exist in the parents to begin with. In sum, piety is likely to promote family concord and love” (p.209).⁶⁷

It is further interesting to note that everything presented as good and clearly promoted by the internal narrator, corresponds almost exactly to that which is presented to be held as intrinsic.

⁶⁶ For Roman views on ethics, duty, and morality in general, see: Morgan (2007), a seminal work in this field; Earl (1967); Rives (2007); and various articles in Martyn (1972). Also, there are the contemporary or near-contemporary works of Polybius (particularly Book 6), Valerius Maximus, and of course Cicero, who is particularly helpful in interpreting what the Romans considered to be moral and why they considered it to have an intrinsic source. Throughout his *De Finibus* and *De Officiis*, the virtues and duties expressed closely reflect those implied to be in Ovid’s text. The relevant sections of these works can effectively be summed up as follows: morality is intrinsic and is both innate in man and self-evident from nature, and the source for these things must be intrinsic because – it is implied – the whole code of morality would be without foundation otherwise, as none of these duties in their entirety logically stem from or are discovered by reason alone. Indeed, the conclusions of one’s reason are only worthy to be heeded when they agree with the duties and mandates supposedly inherent in nature (see also *De Re Publica*, 3.XXI.33). That is, logic and reason are valid as long as they agree with that which is inherent in nature – which Cicero says all men know innately – otherwise reason is deductive rationalising, since it is necessarily based at least partly on emotion. These views are also found in his *De Legibus* (1.X.28) where, speaking about the origins of virtues and duties, Cicero states that they are natural feelings common to some extent to all men, thus they come from nature. Therefore, he implies, this must be the foundation of law and justice (and thus morality) because if not, the virtues upon which human society depends fall in a heap (see also *De Legibus*, 1.XV.43). In these works as a whole, it is also implied that this intrinsic code of morality is based around collectivist premises, which do not stem from independent observation and induction from nature.

⁶⁷ Earlier on, Glenn, speaking of the *Metamorphoses’* Roman stories (in the last three books), observed that these deal with sacrifice, piety, and “...the best kinds of love: devotion to family and to nation (seen in Aeneas); compassion (shown by the Trojans to Achaemenides); the most sober, fruitful, and productive kind of love (exemplified by Vertumnus and Pomona), and respectable and supportive love in high places (represented by Canens and Picus, Hersilia and Romulus, Egeria and Numa)” (p.207).

Given that there is very little narratorial evaluation in this story, I will leave discussion of the link between the narrating voice's evaluation of certain morals and values, and those that are presented as intrinsic, until *Chapter 3 on Scylla*. Suffice to say for the moment that the two are practically synonymous.

The intrinsic approach to morality and its associated morals and duties are presented positively by the narrator, and as opposite to the destruction-bringing subjective approach, the following of that which is intrinsically mandated (whether an action or principle) – irrespective of context or consequences – is also depicted as having the potential to cause destruction for oneself and others. Phoebus' inner conflict is a case in point. Here we have a situation in which Phoebus, after making his promise to Phaethon, and hearing his son's request, must choose between two opposing moral principles, both of which are presented as if intrinsically moral. Neither can be followed without ignoring the other. One option is to do what he ought to do – to keep his word once given – in spite of context or consequences, and forfeit his son's life (which he values highly), and in turn bring ruin to much of the earth. The other option is to do what is presented as ethical in accordance with nature – to do his paternal duty by his son and look after Phaethon's well-being. Both are presented as intrinsically mandated, and each course of action will mean the ignoring of one of these intrinsic principles. The choice between them appears to be decided according to a third intrinsic principle, mentioned earlier: that of selflessness and sacrifice over self-interest. This takes the form of Phoebus giving up the intrinsic duty which is in line with a personal value (the life of his son), in favour of one which does not favour himself or any of his interests (keeping his word). In choosing to adhere to his principles rather than renege on his word, Phoebus is prevented from his paternal duty in looking after his son – an intrinsic mandate which can even be seen to aid his initial decision to make the promise (i.e. intrinsic expectation to love his son) – and loses what is to him a great personal value.

This contradictory situation, and Phoebus' subsequent actions, show the failure of consistent and unswerving duty – duty which is presented as being intrinsically right (both to one's offspring, regardless of their merits, and to keep one's oaths – regardless of context) as such duties can themselves be contradictory. It is thus implied that it is both right and wrong to uphold one's intrinsic duties in certain situations, and the adherence to one intrinsic principle over another can, in certain circumstances, aid destruction. This is a logical result of dropping consideration of context or consequences which comes with intrinsic mandates – something

presented as inherent in the nature of intrinsicism as it is not derived from reality or intelligible to rational thought.

One final implication of both Phoebus' and Phaethon's situations and their results, and those of Cycnus and the Heliades, is that irrespective of what approach a character has to morality, the holding of strong values is presented as likely to be destructive. Had Phoebus not been so loving of Phaethon, he would not have lost his son. Nor, having lost him, would the blow have been so severe. Phoebus is in effect punished for the extent of his value for his son, since he should have kept Phaethon safe, but rashly made his promise out of the emotions stemming from his affection, which made a negative ending inevitable. Had Phaethon not been so passionately determined to gain possession of his father's chariot, he would not have met his ruin. Had Cycnus and the Heliades not valued Phaethon to the extent that they did, their misery would have unlikely been so severe as to end in their respective transformations.⁶⁸ The underlying idea here is that it is self-destructive to love or value too much, as this either lets emotion loose (which is destructive), or makes the failure or loss of that about which one was passionate all the more painful.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ See Otis (1970), p.148, and Tissol (1997), pp.193-4, for a discussion on the depiction of transformations as often appearing to be natural results of certain overwhelming emotion. See also Holzberg (2002), pp.150-1

⁶⁹ An idea not too distant from that of both the Stoic and Epicurean schools prominent in Rome in Ovid's time. On Roman Stoicism, see Arnold (1911); Kerferd (1972); Reydam-Schils (2005); and Saunders (1994). For Epicureanism, see again Saunders (1994), as well as Smith (1956); and Fish and Saunders (2011) for a good introduction.

Further examples of such strong or excessive values (often shown through the extents of characters' emotions) increasing one's chances of misery are as follows: in the story of *Semele* (3.253-315), the extent of Jupiter's feelings for Semele lead to her demise and his loss – if he had not loved her so much, he would not have sworn an oath by the Styx to grant whatever she asked for; in that of *Narcissus*, it is his passion, i.e. the extent of his emotions "new type of passion," "*genus novitasque furores*" (3.350), combined with excess confidence in himself "*superbia*" (3.354), that brought a curse upon him and meant that he could never find satisfaction in love; in the same story, Echo's love causes her to fade away to a voice. Excess value (in the form of unrequited love) is here self-destructive; in the story of *Leucothoe & Clytie* (4.190-273), Clytie pines away and transforms into a flower. The situation is basically the same as that of Narcissus – excess value, love, passion brings misery in the long run; in *Niobe's* case (6.301ff) – we again see that excess value can be self-destructive, as it is the utmost extent of grief that transforms Niobe; we also see this in the case of *Procne* – it is a passion for justice and retribution that makes her careless of right and wrong when trying to right a wrong; during narration of Medea's flight, we hear of a woman called *Hyrie* (7.380-1), who melts away in tears into a pool; in the story of *Daedalus & Icarus* (8.183-235), Icarus is led higher by excess desire for the heights, against the most rational warnings from his father; again with *Byblis* (9.454-665), excessive value does not help, but destroys her – she too cries herself into a fountain; likewise for *Orpheus & Eurydice* (10.1-85), excess love may also be harmful, and often drives one to irrationality. Here this is present in the form of ignoring a clear stipulation from the gods; in the story of *Cyparissus* (10.86-142), Phoebus tries to comfort his lover for the loss of his favourite stag. He admonishes him to grieve "in moderation and consistently with the occasion" "*leviter pro materiaque doleret, admonuit!*" (10.133-4), and as Cyparissus weeps himself to death in grief, he is turned into a cypress; this foreshadows *Orpheus'* fate, in which excess grief makes him turn away from the desires of others, something that in turn brings on the wrath and vengeance of those spurned, and ultimately brings Orpheus to

Summary

A number of aspects of the philosophical outlook inherent in the text can be seen to be necessarily implied by or at least strongly suggested by the treatment of the plot, character, and themes in the story of *Phaethon*. Important in the realm of metaphysics is the presentation of the individual as by nature endowed with an inherent dichotomy between reason and emotion, both of which pull in opposite directions and neither of which is reconcilable with the other. This is particularly emphasised by the implication that emotions are inexplicable primaries, which presuppose neither value-judgements nor any other identifiable aspect of a character's choices, actions, or premises held (consciously or subconsciously). Tied to this is the association of emotion with selfishness, and the presentation of action based on emotion as likely to logically bring about its own failure by ignoring context and consequences. Stemming from this is the presentation of the idea of determinism, in that characters' choices, actions, characters, and fates are in effect out of their hands. They are at the mercy not only of internal forces outside their understanding or control – such as their emotions – but also external forces. This is presented through the depiction of a hierarchy of forces in the universe, each having differing degrees of control over nature's metaphysical laws, and intrinsically having different levels of power. While gods are above men, the Fates are above even the gods. Nevertheless, we see the gods portrayed as much like men in that they too are prone to being influenced by emotion, and metaphysically limited, even if they have greater scope for metaphysical efficacy in comparison to men.

Because of this determinism, particularly through the emotions of god and man being outside their control, negative results of actions based on emotions are not criticized too harshly. Despite this, we do not see particularly sympathetic portrayals of even seemingly undeserved negative fates. This is consistent with the fact that negative fates in general are presented as likely and is portrayed through the presentation in this story of two different approaches to morality – the subjective and the intrinsic. The subjective is based on emotion, lacks a fixed moral code, and takes no account of context or consequences; the intrinsic holds certain values, morals and actions as intrinsically just, right, true, and to be followed despite consequences or context. The subjective approach is linked with selfish and emotionalistic

his death; it is overwhelming passion that conquers *Ajax* (13.385-6), valuing too much makes him suicide; both *Picus* & *Canens* facilitate their ruin through their values (14.308-440). It is *Picus*' passion for *Canens* alone that makes him speak to *Circe* as he does and thus incite her jealousy and anger. Through grief *Canens* cries herself into nothingness; and *Egeria*, *Numa*'s wife, is told by *Hippolytus/Virbius* that she is mourning in excess (15.479-551). Nevertheless, she cries herself into streams, with *Diana*'s help.

morals and values, and the intrinsic the opposite. Despite this, both approaches can aid destruction. This is particularly significant in the case of the intrinsic approach, which is portrayed more positively than the subjective, but is still presented as being able to lead one into contradictory situations with which the intrinsic approach to morality cannot deal. Tied to this is the idea that the very holding of strong values – irrespective of whether or not they are intrinsically determined – can actually aid destruction, misery and failure.

Chapter 2 – Ceres, Dis & Proserpina

Like *Phaethon*, this is one of the poem's longest stories, although far more digressive than the former – being told by not one but a series of internal narrators – and more complex in terms of its main conflict and the number of characters required to enact it. The story is based around characters of divine stature, and is less to do with characterisation and the results of personal motives than superhuman forces, their world-scale actions, and their limitations. The story's ending contains both positive and tragic elements.

This group of stories, although at first complex and confusing (a veritable web of conflicts in fact), gives a particularly clear insight into several aspects of the philosophical view of the universe inherent within the poem which were not found (at least to the same extent) in *Phaethon*. Most noteworthy among these is the explicit presentation of the metaphysical hierarchy of forces in the universe. We see gods depicted as superior to men, and some gods as superior to others (in both metaphysical power and authority), but the power of love as being above even the gods, and the power of the Fates above them all. As a corollary, we see that a number of factors express the idea that characters' fates are likely to be determined by internal or external forces beyond their control. We also see that although a character may achieve a fate which seems deserved by their approach to morality, this does not mean that the two are logically connected; chance plays a part in many of these characters' fates. Additionally, we see that the gods have a keen interest in how they are perceived and treated by lesser characters, and often punish those who spurn them. This is particularly noticeable in the case of Venus. Also likely to draw on negative consequences is the holding of particularly strong values, irrespective of the moral approach with which they are associated. The same goes for the qualities and skills one may have which are above the norm. Once again we see a link between personal value and emotion, and emotion and destruction. We also see in this story a number of values, actions, and moral principles depicted as intrinsic. These include: parental love; respect, fear, and obedience towards one's superiors; and the good treatment of guests. The virtue of selflessness is also implied.

1. Introduction

Given that the great majority of the stories in Ovid's text are thoroughly interwoven with those around them, it has been hard to select complete units for study. In this chapter, I have chosen to deal primarily with the stories contained *within* the song of the unnamed Muse (5.341-661; hereafter referred to as the song of Calliope, because it is her song that the unnamed Muse retells). However, as it is my object to examine the work's inherent philosophical outlook from the way in which these stories are told, it would be improper to ignore the context in which they are given.¹ These all form part of the broader myth of the contest of *The Muses & The Pierides*, as related to Minerva by the unnamed Muse and, as discussed below, these stories have been chosen consciously by Calliope for a specific purpose. More importantly, we will see throughout the course of this thesis that both the themes and implied philosophical outlook inherent in the stories contained in Calliope's song are consistent not only with those already observed in the story of *Phaethon*, but indeed those found throughout the *Metamorphoses* in general. This is one of the reasons why this set of stories can be treated as reflective of the poem's inherent philosophical outlook, and not merely a reflection of that held by the Muses.

The main aspects of the tale as found in the *Metamorphoses*² are as follows: Venus, goddess of love, upset at being neglected, makes Dis, the god of the underworld, fall irresistibly in love with Proserpina, the chaste virgin daughter of Ceres, the goddess of grain, harvest, and fertility who, along with Dis, has previously remained a stranger to Venus' power. Dis, having succumbed instantly, abducts Proserpina. Ceres, after a long and destructive period of searching for her daughter, discovers what has happened to her and persuades Juppiter, Proserpina's father, to have her returned. Juppiter agrees, but a condition is set in accordance, he says, with the will of the Fates (the Parcae),³ that this is only to occur if she has not yet

¹ As Mack (1988) rightly stresses "We have always to listen carefully to assess the stories Ovid's narrators tell, because they reflect the biases of their narrators" (p.135). Barchiesi (2006) similarly notes that what is told, and in what context, i.e. who is telling it, why (and what their agenda might be), can mean that when a story is looked at in conjunction with one or more stories around it, a completely different ethical or metaphysical meaning can be read than if one had just taken it as a stand-alone tale: "the identity of the narrator can have an implicit relation to a theme" (p.276). Consequently, such things must be considered carefully before accepting a story as directly reflecting what is consistently implied throughout the poem, and it must be kept in mind that what is explicitly stated or deliberately emphasised by an internal character is not necessarily supported by the text – consistent with that which is implicit in their actions and their results. See also Barchiesi (2002), pp.187-95, on this topic.

² Referred to hereafter as the "*Met.* version," rather than "Ovid's version" on account of the fact that Ovid also treated this story in his *Fasti* (4.417-620).

³ For the naming of the Fates in Ovid, see Kajanto (1961).

tasted Tartarean food. This condition has already been broken and it is decided that Proserpina will spend half of each year with her mother and half with her new husband. Ceres causes the destruction which has been brought upon the earth during her search to be put to rights.

The legends surrounding the figures of Proserpina, Ceres and Dis – even the pre-Ovidian ones – are vast and disparate, and it is beyond the scope of this thesis to cover them thoroughly here. What is important is that there are a plethora of references associating Proserpina with Dis in the pre-Ovidian tradition, starting with Homer and Hesiod,⁴ many of which deal with the abduction, but among these, the only two of significant length are the accounts found in the *Homeric Hymn II to Demeter*, and Diodorus Siculus' *Bibliotheca Historica* 5.2.3-5.1, 5.68.2. Diodorus' account of the abduction is largely made up of individual details, of which all the main mythological ones are consistent with those found in the *Met.* version, suggesting that this was Ovid's primary model.⁵ Further evidence that this is so comes from the fact that the *Met.* version excludes all the same major alternate aspects of the myth that Diodorus' does, and which are known to have been extant in Diodorus' time, such as those given in the *Homeric Hymn II to Demeter*.⁶ Some of these differences are important for our analysis, because their presence or exclusion here (as opposed to earlier sources and the version given in the *Fasti*) help evidence what are or are not the story's explicit themes. For example, a plot point different from the *Homeric Hymn* is in the relationship of the pomegranate seeds to the story. In the earlier version, these were given deliberately by Dis in order to keep Proserpina in the underworld. As will be seen later, Dis in the *Met.* version, having been overcome by love, acts completely on emotion, without considering context and consequences – an explicit theme – and the tricking of Proserpina

⁴ Hom. *Il.* 9.455-7, 9.569; and throughout *Od.* Books 10 and 11; Hes. *Theog.* 913-4; *Hom. Hymn II to Demeter*; Dio. Sic. 5.2.3-5.1; Verg. *Georg.* 1.36ff; Cic. *De Nat. Deo.* 2.26; Prop. 3.22; and Bacchyl. *Book 1, Hymns*, (from *Schol. ad Hes. Theog.*).

⁵ The most significant difference is that Diodorus mentions Minerva and Diana as having been with Proserpina when she was abducted, a fact made practically impossible in Ovid's version by the context of presentation of the story; it is being told to Minerva. For alternate (and more widely accepted) theories of Ovid's sources, see the discussion by Otis (1970), p.50, n.1, and the words of Anderson (1997), pp.534-5.

⁶ These include: the fact that Dis was prompted in his lust not by Venus, but Jupiter himself; the fact that it is the sun – Phoebus (Helios) – who informs Ceres of what happened to her daughter; the inclusion of the goddess Hecate in the myth; the story of Demeter nursing or bringing up a child belonging to people who take her in on her wanderings. Elements of these are found in the *Fasti* version, strongly suggesting that the following of Diodorus' version in the *Metamorphoses* is an entirely conscious choice. However, the influence of the *Hymn* can be seen in several places, such as the hymnic beginning to the song of Ceres (5.341-5), noted by Wilkinson (1957), p.200; Glenn (1986), p.62; Solodow (1988), p.20; and both Hill (1992) and Anderson (1997) on 5.341-5.

into eating the seed would be inconsistent with this, being an act of cunning (considered thought). I discuss this further presently.

That the philosophical ideas we find to be inherent in this group of stories are not merely a reflection on the Muses' own outlook, but on that of the *Metamorphoses* itself, can be seen from the fact that these ideas are consistent with what we find throughout the poem. Additionally, this can be seen from the fact that the tales the Muses tell are selected by them for specific purposes, and yet the ideas implicit in their tales undercut these purposes in some respects. We can see this from the context in which the story is told.

The nine mortal daughters of Pierus, arrogant in their opinion of their own excellence of voice and skill in song (5.310), challenge the nine Muses, goddesses of song, to a singing contest. Such an action shows the Pierides' impious attitude towards the divine (a fact reinforced by their antagonistic behaviour upon losing, 5.663ff), and what happens to them shows the instigation of such a contest with divinities to have been thoroughly ill-advised. Consequently it is no surprise that the content of the Pierides song, just like their challenge and reactions at defeat, belittles the gods (by portraying them as cowardly, and describing a defiance and supposedly successful usurpation of their supremacy, 5.319-31). That the depiction of the gods' metaphysical potency given in their song is false (evidenced here and throughout the poem), reflects the aspect of their characters (impiety and low opinion of the gods) that facilitated their own negative fates, and allowed them to make their challenge in the first place.

The Muses' response is also reflective of their characters and view of the divine's place in the universe. That the content of their song is deliberately chosen as a contrast to that of the Pierides is foreshadowed by the Muses' statement that the Pierides lied (5.319-20), and evidenced by the fact that their own song rebuts the falsehoods of their challengers' and, moreover, emphasises the impious and unwise actions of the Pierides that will eventually cause their ruin. Specifically, the Muses' song begins with a true account of the Gigantomachy of which the Pierides sung,⁷ gives a fuller and truer account of the gods' place in the universe' hierarchy of forces, and tells of how the gods – mainly because of their potency – should be treated with respect and fear, and customarily wreak disastrous

⁷ Rosati (2002), pp.300-1, notes that the Muses, by referring to Typhoeus' fate in their story, show that the Pierides were selective and in a way dishonest in their narrative, and thus characterises them as falsifiers by their selection. The truth of the Muses' sentiments in this respect is consistent with what the narrator said about Juppiter and the destruction of the giants at 1.152ff.

consequences on inferiors who spurn or challenge them.⁸ The fact that all this is deliberate on the Muses' part is further implied by the explicit themes of these stories being primarily to do with the metaphysical makeup and hierarchy of the universe, rather than characters and results of individuals' actions, which is almost universally the case in the *Metamorphoses*. This reflects the contest in which they are involved.

However, although this story, told by divinities to the another divinity (Minerva), is understandably about divine superiority – as is explicitly stated in the Muses' introduction (5.341-5)⁹ – and reveals the metaphysical hierarchy of forces in the universe, it still implicitly contains several facts that undercut the majesty of the divine, and the intentions of the Muses' story. For example, it shows the gods as capricious, fallible, and subject to both the commands of the Fates and their own uncontrollable and often excessive emotions.¹⁰ Also noteworthy is the fact that the Muses' subject matter is strikingly incongruous to the expected interests of both themselves and Minerva.¹¹ They deal with *amor* and emotions, subjects not suited to goddesses dedicated to virginity,¹² whose proficiency in their respective fields is often associated with their being free from emotion.¹³ Further, they contain examples of the gods' fallibility in these respects,¹⁴ combined with stories about those who aspire to be like Minerva and the Muses enticing negative fates on account of the very qualities that make them similar to the goddesses.

Here we see (as we will again in later chapters) internal narrators clearly telling their stories with certain deliberate, explicit themes, the details of the stories they tell unwittingly reflect on matters that evidence suggests they do not intend. Thus the narrators are in fact unaware

⁸ The main function of the Muses' story is described by Tarrant (2002) as "a vindication of the gods" (p.21).

⁹ See Solodow (1988), p.20.

¹⁰ See Otis (1970), p.58. Objections have been raised to the veracity of the tale the Muses tell by Galinsky (1975) p.175, on account of the doubts expressed by Orpheus (10.26-9). However, although it could be argued that the validity of doubts is evidenced in the fact that he is supposed to be the son of one of the Muses (10.148) who, in their story to Minerva, stress their virginity (a point Galinsky never makes), these lines, given the context in which they are given, seem far more to be a pretend doubt, like that which Phaethon expresses to Phoebus, uttered to remind Dis and Proserpina of the fact that they should be able to sympathise with Orpheus' situation, having felt similar emotions themselves. See also the observations of Hinds (1987) p.135.

¹¹ See the observations of Otis (1970), p.153. We would expect the song to give a sympathetic treatment of both Proserpina and Arethusa's plights (which is not exactly what we get – discussed below), given that they are so alike both the narrators and audience of the Muses' tale.

¹² See 2.219, 5.254ff, 5.74; and 2.579, 2.765, 4.754, 14.468. See also Segal (1969a), p.53.

¹³ Dio. Sic. 4.7.1.

¹⁴ Discussed in depth by Otis (1970), pp.50-8.

of the implicit aspects of their tales.¹⁵ This, combined with the fact that the philosophical ideas we find present inherently in the Muses' stories are consistent with those found throughout the poem (as we will see later in this chapter and throughout the course of this thesis), shows that regardless of what points these narrators clearly *mean* their stories to have, what we and our analyses can come up with is reflective of the deeper, overall inherent philosophical outlook inherent in the *Metamorphoses* as a whole.

2. Conflict

Although there are more conflicts in this story than that of Phaethon, the identification of the main conflict is in a sense easier – the motivations for the characters actions being more obvious. This is tied to the fact that the focus in this story is, unlike many in the *Metamorphoses*, not so much on the choices and actions of individual characters, but rather on the relationships between the various forces active in the universe.¹⁶

There are four characters who instantly come to mind as likely candidates for inclusion as essential in the statement of the main conflict: Ceres, Dis, Proserpina and Venus. Since the whole story encompassed by Calliope's song is – as is stated by Calliope – about Ceres: “All things are the gift of Ceres; she is to be the subject of my song.” “*Cereris sunt omnia munus./ illa canenda mihi est*” (5.343-4), and as it is with Dis that Ceres is superficially in conflict over her daughter, Proserpina, one might at first glance think that the driving conflict, that upon which the story hangs, is Ceres v. Dis. However, if we remember the context of Dis' actions – their being driven by Venus – we can see that Dis is merely a tool of Venus, and that it is with her that Ceres is primarily in conflict.

¹⁵ See Glenn (1986), pp.65ff, who notes the incongruity inherent in the Muse's song, summing up that “The best that one can say for her song is that it uneasily straddles two themes, one major, one minor” (p.66) – one explicit and one implicit. That this is deliberate on Ovid's part both here, and in other stories, is noted by Rosati (1999), p.251. More broadly on the undercutting of the loftiness and perfection of the Muses and their tale, see Glenn (1986), pp.61ff; Galinsky (1975), p.175; and Mack (1988), pp.134-5. Specifically on the undercutting of the Muses through comedy and subtle highlighting of their imperfections, see the commentary by Anderson (1997), beginning at 5.269. His opinion of this internally narrated story is summed up when he says, in comparison with the Pierides, “the Muses prove equally obnoxious and incompetent, I think, by their poem; and we suffer it *ad nauseam* for more than three hundred meandering lines” (p.525).

¹⁶ That this is deliberate can be seen by the contrast between the *Met.* version of the story, and that given in the *Fasti* (4.417-620), which is primarily focused on character. See discussions in Heinze (1919); Hinds (1987); Förster (1874); and Otis (1970), pp.50ff, who also summarises the less mainstream scholarship.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that Venus is the protagonist. Although she is responsible for the inciting incident (the subjugation of Dis), which is the cause in action for the basic conflict (Dis v. Proserpina and thus in turn Ceres),¹⁷ it is not her decisions that move the story. That honour goes to Ceres, she is both the emotional focus of the story and the source of its momentum. It is Ceres who wishes and *acts* to find her daughter and bring her back from the underworld.

Because Proserpina is the issue over which the other characters come into conflict, and the conflicts of Ceres and Proserpina v. Dis come about *because of* Venus, it is clear that we cannot omit any of these four characters from the statement of the main conflict. Thus the main conflict is Ceres v. Venus *by means of* Dis over Proserpina.

3. Plot-development

*Backstory and establishment of the situation*¹⁸

Although we are not only presented with Venus' character but see her act through her key decisions well before the character of Ceres is fully established (her values and motives presented), it is Ceres of whom we first hear. While brief, the Muse Calliope states clearly in her introduction that Ceres is to be the focus of this story, and begins the establishment of the situation by giving us a few details about her (5.341-3): that Ceres is strongly associated with food and agriculture, as well as lawgiving. All of these are important aspects of her character in the story that follows.

However, after this introduction the focus turns briefly to Dis, and then settles on Venus, whose character is established through both dialogue and action. In her first and only speech (to Cupid, 5.365-79), we hear Venus' own statements of what motivates her actions: that she has been rejected by both Minerva and Diana; and that she sees this pattern as likely to continue, and so wishes to reassert herself. This reveals what values are important to Venus

¹⁷ By "basic conflict" I mean the most superficial expression of, and that which expands into, the main conflict – in this case Dis v. Proserpina. This term was not used in the story of Phaethon since there were only two essential characters and one obvious manifestation of the main conflict, thus making the main conflict and the basic conflict one and the same.

¹⁸ The establishment of the situation and the rise to the climax are to some extent intertwined in this story, but for the sake of clarity, I have separated their respective elements as much as possible.

in the context of this story, and hints at her general character. Most significantly, she claims to have terrific power over all who are above the earth's surface, including the gods, and chooses Dis, the king of the underworld who has remained aloof from the powers of love, and Proserpina, the chaste and virgin daughter of Ceres, as the instruments of reasserting her power. Venus takes action through Cupid, and we see the authenticity of her stated motivations through the fulfilment of her desires. Dis' is subjugated and Proserpina abducted by him. The truth of practically everything said in Venus' opening speech is evidenced in action as the story progresses.

By this point, the establishment of the minor characters, Dis and Proserpina, is complete. Dis is said to be powerful, but shown to still be vulnerable to Venus' influence, and Proserpina, while said to desire perpetual virginity, is shown to lack the capacity to withstand Dis. Venus' character has also been established. She has carried out the inciting incident and the conflict over which she and Ceres clash looms large. However, the establishment of the situation is not yet complete. We have yet to see Ceres' character in action, and brought to the situation in which she comes into conflict with Venus. This only occurs at the climax.

*Build-up*¹⁹

After Venus' actions are carried out, Ceres is reintroduced, and the story follows her actions from the finding of her daughter missing until the climax. This section serves both as a second part of the establishment of the situation (bringing Ceres to the main conflict and fleshing out its consequences and the seriousness of the values at stake) and as the establishment *in action* of Ceres' character. With regard to these actions, much of what we see is what has already been stated by Calliope: that Ceres has an association with food and agriculture, and has a partiality to justice. We also see that she values Proserpina, and the intensity of the desire for her daughter's return is shown through the sequence of events that ultimately bring us to the point of her meeting with Juppiter – who is not only the ruler of the gods but Proserpina's father.

¹⁹ The set-up being only fully complete at the climax, there is no build-up in intensity comparable to what we saw in *Phaethon*, only in establishment. Since this is still a build-up of a kind and is markedly a different part of the story, I will retain the heading given above for this section.

Throughout this section, the consequences of the main conflict are revealed little by little, until Ceres learns the truth of what has happened to her daughter, and comes to Juppiter in order to get her back. This is the climax. Here, the characters make their final decisions. Ceres shows her inflexible will by insisting on the return of her daughter, even when Juppiter has stipulated that the Fates decree that this may only happen if Proserpina has not eaten Tartarean fruits (5.530-2), and so passes her last chance to change her mind. This is also the scene in which the last bastion of Venus' plans (in the character of Juppiter, who has not only been susceptible to her power – already seen in the stories of *Io*, *Callisto*, *Europa*, and *Semele* – but even explicitly excused the abduction of Proserpina by Dis as no crime, but a mere act of love “*verum amor est*,” 5.525-6)²⁰ seems to be about to fall, since we find out that Dis must give in to Juppiter's will.

Resolution

Finally, we come to the result, the resolution of the climax and its aftermath. It is revealed that Proserpina has already contravened the condition set upon her return, and it has been witnessed and testified against. Although it seems that Venus has been victorious – since she has achieved her objective and Ceres failed – Juppiter arbitrates the situation by sharing Proserpina equally between her mother and her new husband.

As in *Phaethon*, throughout this story we see that there is a whole nest of other smaller conflicts which hang on, stem from and emphasize the main conflict.²¹ These will be discussed later, but should be listed at the outset:

²⁰ It should be noted that Juppiter may not be being as open as he would have Ceres believe, since he, being ruler of the gods, would be expected to know that Proserpina has already broken her oath. If so, this would indicate that he only holds out the possibility of Proserpina's return in order to appease Ceres. This could also be a possible literary allusion to previous versions of the myth in which Juppiter was complicit in the abduction. Consider for example the versions given in the *Hom. Hym. II to Demeter*, as well as Hes. *Theog.* 913-4; Apollod. *Lib.* 1.29; Claud. *De Rapt.* 1; and Hygi. *Fab.* 146. Also importantly, Juppiter's unfazed reaction to Ceres' complains is consistent with the fact that he too is a serial rapist, of which Ceres should be aware, given the similar circumstances of their own union (referred to by Arachne at 6.118-9) – noted by Anderson (1997) on 5.512-7.

²¹ Otis (1970), p.50, rightly observes that this tale is atypical in the *Metamorphoses* on account of the fact that the digressions contained within it are all related to major aspects/ plot points of this story, and are thus more obviously integrated to the main conflict than usual.

Cyane v. Dis (5.409-37). A result of the inciting incident which forms part of the build-up and foreshadows the main conflict.

Ceres v. the insulting youth (5.446-61). A conflict which forms part of the establishment of Ceres' character and emphasises the consequences of the main conflict.

Ceres v. the earth and its inhabitants (5.474-86). Another expression of the main conflict given as part of the build-up.

Ceres v. Juppiter (5.512ff). The expression, in action, of the main conflict at the climax.

Lyncus v. Triptolemus/Ceres (5.646-61). A conflict given as part of the resolution, which again stems from the main conflict and is tied to it thematically.

Proserpina v. Ascalaphus (5.534-52). Another conflict expressing the main one and which forms part of the resolution.

We may also add to this list the tale of the metamorphosis of the Sirens (5.552-63). Although uncertainty is expressed that their transformation is related to the *Ceres, Dis & Proserpina* story, its inclusion here by Calliope implies that it is meant to be taken as such. Regardless of whether or not this story is another that stems from or emphasizes the main conflict by being a result of its consequences, this story is nevertheless undoubtedly linked to it thematically (discussed below).

Finally there is the tale of *Arethusa v. Alpheus* (5.577-641). A conflict related tangentially to the main one – during the resolution of which it is told – but united in theme; it being an expression of the implicit conflict of Venus v. Diana referred to in Venus' opening speech.

4. Characterisation

Let us look first at the character of Venus, since it is she who initiates the action which brings about the main conflict. In her opening speech to Cupid as to why he should strike Dis with his arrow of love (5.365-79), she states that she is motivated because she believes the sphere of her influence – her “*imperium*” (5.472) which, to her, takes the form of conquering and controlling: “you have conquered and rule over the gods above and Juppiter himself and the

divinities of the sea, and that one who rules the divinities of the sea” “*tu superos ipsumque Iovem, tu numina ponti/ victa domas ipsumque regit qui numina ponti*” (5.369-70) – should extend over the whole world, not just two thirds of it. The realms of Juppiter and Neptune have already submitted (5.369-70).²² This desire is particularly strong on account of the fact that her sway over the currently possessed two thirds has become insecure by the rebellion of Minerva and Diana,²³ in whose footsteps Venus considers Proserpina likely to follow (5.376-7). The truths of all her statements are verified throughout the *Metamorphoses*.

With regard to her character, what we learn from this is that Venus strongly values her image in the eyes of others, and particularly her influence over them. She desires to rule and be obeyed. It is also noteworthy that the issue of the morality of Venus’ actions never seems to be considered; the implication being that as far as her sphere of influence is concerned, she considers herself the source of any such morality.

It is important to note at this point that Venus is represented more as the embodiment of the power of love than as an individual character, and the two are in fact largely inseparable. Venus’ motivations seem to be based on the way she as the personification and goddess of love believes the power of love should act and be received. These views and her personal feelings are depicted as one and the same, and it is easy to see that less emphasis falls on the fate of her character in this story than is given to the success or failure of the power of love. We are not told the final feelings of her *character* after the climax has been reached, but we do get to know the extent of her *power* as the personification of love.

Less can be said about Dis and Proserpina. The former, upon returning to the underworld with Proserpina, disappears from this story. Only his lack of action is left to use as possible evidence for characterisation. Admittedly, we do not learn much about him during the abduction either. He merely acts according to the emotions which have been put upon him, a fact emphasised by the rapidity of the narration of his encounter with Proserpina: “almost at once Dis saw and loved and abducted her” “*paene simul visa est dilectaque raptaque Diti*”

²² This refers to the tripartite division of the universe by lot after the demise of Saturn, first mentioned at 2.291 and again here in 5.367-8.

²³ The scorning of love by Diana can be seen in Arethusa’s tale later on in this book (577-640), and Diana is elsewhere often referred to specifically as a virgin goddess (2.251, 3.164, 12.28), as is Minerva (2.579, 2.765, 4.754, 14.468).

(5.395).²⁴ Nevertheless, from his confrontation with Cyane, Dis is presented as extremely powerful, but the fact that he is not presented as taking action to stop Proserpina returning, and seems to obey Juppiter without quiddit, is evidence that he is the subordinate to Juppiter in terms of overall authority.²⁵ Excepting this, all we learn from the opening description about Dis is that he is the great king of Tartarus who is, in taking it upon himself to check Sicily's security against the rumblings of Typhoeus, conscientious in doing what is in effect his job (5.346-63).²⁶ Here, importantly, as we saw with Phoebus earlier, there is a change in Dis' implied character between this initial depiction as a conscientious ruler, and that seen in his actions after having been overcome by a new and foreign emotional state. He is another example of a part-time emotionalist.

Proserpina is depicted as being a young and playful goddess (5.392-4, 400-1, 535), and is in general characterised as innocent and girlish in her simplicity. To this, we can add that she is both distressed and resentful of what befalls her, and completely incapable of matching her captor in power (5.396-8). Proserpina calls on her mother at the time of the abduction and is miserable both during and after it; as reported by Arethusa, she is melancholy "*tristis*" (5.506), and later in Dis' eyes sorrowful "*maesta*" (5.569). The extent of her dissatisfaction is emphasised by her anger at the revelation of Ascalaphus which causes her to be detained in Tartarus, and by the contrasting joy she shows at being returned to the world above (5.568-71). Lastly, that she has at least some powers of a goddess is demonstrated by her transformation of the informing nymph (5.543-50).²⁷

In Ceres' case, as befits the protagonist, much more information is given. Her importance among the gods, as well as her power and influence, is alluded to at the start by the Muses:

First Ceres turned the earth with hooked plough,
first she gave fruits and ripe nourishment to the earth,
first she gave laws; all things are the gift of Ceres;
she is to be the subject of my song; would that I were able to sing a song

²⁴ As Anderson (1997), on 4.391-5, observes, "The Muse crowds three verbs into a line and thus compresses the whole event." A similarly hasty account is given in Ovid's *Fasti*, 4.445. See Curran (1978).

²⁵ The reader may well remember that in other authors' treatments of the myth, it is on account of Dis' cunning that Proserpina eats the pomegranate seeds before leaving Tartarus (e.g. the *Hom. Hym. II to Demeter* and *Apollod. Lib. 1.33*). Here, the fact that Proserpina plucked the pomegranate while wandering "*errat*" (5.535) in, and that Ascalaphus alone saw and revealed the action (5.538-42) implies that Dis had no part in it.

²⁶ Otis (1970), p.55.

²⁷ Fratantuono (2011) posits that the power she demonstrates here is a direct reflection on her new status as "queen of the dead" (p.138).

worthy of such a goddess. Surely the goddess is worthy of such song.

*Prima Ceres unco glaebam dimovit aratro,
prima dedit fruges alimentaue mitia terris,
prima dedit leges; Cereris sunt omnia munus.
illa canenda mihi est; utinam modo dicere possim
carmina digna dea! certe dea carmine digna est.* (5.341-5)

She seems to be the fountainhead of many important disciplines. This sets her up as a being respected by mortal and immortal alike, and foreshadows her future actions in several ways. Given her influence in the realm of farming and food production, and the fact that she is said to be interested in justice, it is understandable that the usually kindly “*alma*” (5.572) Ceres might, in a fit of emotion, take away her agricultural gifts when she does not know who to blame for her daughter’s abduction (5.474-7).²⁸ This action is a good example of her power. However, in all this, nothing we are told about her suggest that she will be a possible obstacle in the designs of Venus.

Ceres’ distress at the loss of her daughter, and the tiring, ceaseless search on which she embarks to discover her whereabouts, prove the extent to which she loves Proserpina, and explains why she wants to see justice done by her. The sincerity of Ceres’ love for her daughter is also evidenced by the fact that all of the above is reported to have happened *before* seeing Proserpina’s girdle – and realising for certain that she had been abducted. Thus it was not just her dislike for Dis or his manner of taking her daughter as a wife that was her first cause for grief, but the loss of a great value in the person of her daughter.

Ceres’ hierarchy of values (and thus motivations) can be deduced from the three different stages of grief and understanding through which she passes. Firstly, she is genuinely worried about the daughter she loves and searches for her, trying to find out what has happened (5.439-70). Secondly, knowing that her daughter has been abducted, she is devastated at the circumstances of her loss and tries to find out where Proserpina is now (5.471-508). Finally, she appears mortified and goes truly mad “*amentia*” (5.511) with grief when she learns the details of the abduction and discovers that the culprit is the formidable Dis (5.509ff).²⁹

²⁸ Both Ceres’ action being based on emotion and her excessive rage are noted by Otis (1970), p.52.

²⁹ See also the commentary of Anderson (1997), who observes how in each case, the previous feelings seem to be superseded and even forgotten by Ceres each time her understanding of the situation increases.

Ceres, although deeply displeased at what has occurred, comes to Juppiter and emphasises her own humility and powerlessness before his authority by describing herself as a suppliant “*supplex*” (5.514).³⁰ The implication of her words to Juppiter is that he has a paternal duty to do well by Proserpina, and she explicitly states that now she knows her daughter is safe, her first concern is seeing justice done for the *manner* in which Dis has taken Proserpina: “that she was abducted, we may bear, if only he will return her; for your daughter does not deserve a thief for a husband, if now she is not my daughter” “*quod rapta, feremus,/ dummodo redat eam; neque enim praedone marito/ filia digna tua est, si iam mea filia non est*” (5.520-2). The Muse’s description of Ceres as being associated with lawgiving, along with her punishment of Lyncus later in the tale, is evidence that Ceres is genuinely interested in justice, and does merely tell Juppiter that such is her main concern because she thinks this is what is most likely to win him over. However, her own love for her daughter and her desire to have her with her is obviously still an important factor and explains why she insists on Proserpina’s return, not merely a desire to see justice done.

All of this shows Ceres as a determined character. She does not balk from her endeavours when she has found out what has happened to her daughter, that the culprit is Dis who, according to Juppiter, has been compelled to his actions by love, and is thus blameless (5.524-6). Nor is Juppiter’s warning about the possibility of the Fates intervening enough to sway her from her purpose. Despite this, Ceres does give over to her emotions in the first throws of grief at the loss of her daughter, and her actions (particularly towards the earth’s inhabitants and their crops) are irrational given the circumstances. Thus Ceres is another example of a part-time emotionalist – acting on emotion only for a certain period when overcome with grief.

Evaluation of characters

In the cases of Dis, Proserpina and Venus, very little information about their characterisation is given. This, combined with the fact that Venus is here presented more as the embodiment of a *force*, than as an individual character, is consistent with the fact that, unlike *Phaethon*, characterisation is not the primary focus of this story, and means that we have very little to

³⁰ This also hints at a contrast between herself and Dis, who did not come before Juppiter to ask permission for his actions, as a suppliant or otherwise.

say with regard to these characters' evaluations. Indeed the overall impression given is one of indifference, both in the eyes of the internal narrators, and with respect to the poem's inherent philosophical outlook.

In the cases of Dis and Proserpina, we are given no explicit statement of narratorial evaluation, and there is little to suggest deliberate portrayal of either by the narrator in a particularly positive or negative light. This is so even though both are presented as being largely unwitting victims of what eventually befalls them – shown by Proserpina's inability to defend herself, and Dis' instantaneous and complete submission before the power of love, which implicitly takes away any responsibility we might otherwise attribute to him for his subsequent actions. However, implicitly, neither Proserpina nor Dis are portrayed as completely blameless victims of circumstance. In both of these cases, a very specific aspect of their characters is presented as significantly influencing the events that befall them – their rejection of the power of Venus.

This attitude alone opens them up to and even incites their being targeted by Venus, and thus, by drawing on the negative consequences that befall them, implicitly reflects negatively on their characters. This implicit depiction is consistent with the fact that the Muses are telling a story about the superiority of gods and the likelihood of their punishing those who spurn them and their powers, and explains why what happens to these characters, while not necessarily depicted as deserved, is neither treated as particularly surprising, or to be sympathised with. However, this depiction is the opposite of what we might expect given that their story is being told by and to goddesses that have consciously abstained from Venus.

When it comes to Venus, again little can be said. All of her words and actions are bunched into the first scene, and the results we see are merely examples in action of love's power and limitations – as opposed to results which reflect positively or negatively on her *character's* choices and actions. On this account, I will pass over the evaluation of Venus as a character, and leave the discussion on the results of her power to sections 5 and 6.

The last of the four main characters, Ceres, is explicitly presented by the internal narrators in a predominantly positive light. As stated by Calliope at the outset, Ceres' attitude towards the earth and its inhabitants is normally a benevolent and generous one. Similarly, she can be easily sympathised with for the loss of her daughter; an event completely unrelated to Ceres' character, choices or actions, and one which causes her much grief. On the other hand, the

manner in which Ceres behaves throughout the story does not quite match this laudatory beginning;³¹ she commits actions that do not reflect on her admirably, and which stem from the excessive emotions of her grief, such as her angry transformation of the brash youth who mocked her, and her wreaking havoc among crops and farms on account of a rash assumption of their guilt.

Nevertheless, while these actions are blatantly irrational and stem from *personal* grief, neither is criticised within the tale, and both are standard practice for the gods and seemingly to be expected given the depth of her grief. Indeed, as we observed in the character of Phoebus, such excessive emotions – presented as unintelligible and outside a character’s control – affect even the most rational characters when they are overcome by grief, and it is therefore perfectly understandable that minimal blame is associated with them.³² Moreover, this selfish action is counterbalanced by the fact that Ceres is carrying out the duty of a parent to their child – implied earlier and presented throughout the *Metamorphoses* as intrinsically moral. As a whole, Ceres is presented in an explicitly positive light by the internal narrator, although some of her actions implicitly suggest a less praiseworthy evaluation.³³

5. Theme

We now have all the main elements of the story, including the characters, their motivations and values at stake, and the ruling issue of conflict between them, and can move onto the statement of the plot-theme: *A goddess tries to retrieve her beloved daughter, who has been abducted by a powerful god, as a result of the goddess of love striving to reassert her power.* The main conflict is between Venus and Ceres (by means of Dis, over Proserpina). What results as a consequence does so on account of the power of Venus, the decrees of the Fates, Ceres’ value for her daughter and her insistence upon justice. Venus’ power is demonstrated when it overcomes even the great Dis; the influence of the Fates is revealed through the

³¹ As Anderson (1997) put it, “the role the Muse somewhat incompetently assigns her does not exemplify the benevolent qualities exalted in the invocation” (p.534). For example, the Muse prefers to dwell on the scene of Ceres’ emotionalistic and out of proportion reaction to the taunts of the mortal youth “rather on the traditional picture of kindly Ceres at Eleusis gently nursing a baby boy [the traditional version of Ceres’ visitation to mortal homes during her wanderings]. She evidently admires a goddess who can be powerful in her wrath, regardless of provocation” (Anderson on 5.453-4).

³² Noted by Fratantuono (2011), p.137.

³³ A point Anderson (1997) treats as major, arguing that Ceres is an “unappealing major character” (p.526).

words of Juppiter and is confirmed in what happens to Proserpina; Ceres' love causes her emotional outbursts and inspires her determination to retrieve her daughter; and her *insistence on justice* is seen in her confrontation with Juppiter. In the end, Venus achieves her object of reasserting herself and gaining influence over the third and final part of the world's dominion, Ceres regains her daughter for half of the year, and the earth is restored to normal.

Within the confines of its desires as stated by Venus, its personification, the power of love is successful; both Dis and Proserpina are brought under its dominion. The reasons for Venus' success are thematically important. By its very nature, the power of love is presented as being superior to that of even the gods. This is consistent with what we saw in the *Phaethon* story. Because values are linked with emotion, and even the gods are depicted as being subject to an inherent irreconcilable dichotomy between reason and emotion, their very metaphysical makeup allows them no option of rejecting the power of love if it takes hold.³⁴

The power of love is further emphasised by the fact that the very attempt – and often merely desire – to elude its influence, can make one specifically singled out to be targeted by it. Almost as soon as we consider the fates of Proserpina and Dis, we see that no factor in their characters or actions other than their rejection of the powers of Venus has anything to do with their ultimate outcomes. Proserpina is targeted because she wishes to remain a virgin like Pallas and Diana, and Dis because he has not previously succumbed to Venus' influence.

Even the gods themselves admit openly by their words and actions that they are subject to love's power. Juppiter's opinion of Proserpina's abduction is an example: he essentially suggests that love comes from emotion that is both unchosen and unavoidable, and because actions committed under its auspices are not within the control of the characters that perform them, these characters should not, therefore, be blamed (5.523ff).³⁵

³⁴ Although most of the *Metamorphoses'* gods (both male and female) get carried away by lust at some point or other, a further example which particularly illustrates this point can be found in the story of *Daphne* (1.452-567), in which Cupid specifically targets Apollo to prove the power he has over him. Stephens (1957) notes that here "the outcome of the story shows that Cupid is truly as much more powerful than all the other gods (including Apollo) as they are more powerful than mortals. To put it another way, the other gods are at only an intermediate stage in power, while Cupid is supreme" (pp.79-80). Similarly in *Orpheus & Eurydice* (10.1-85), Orpheus emphasises the point that love works equally on gods and men, and it is in effect love that conquers the gods; and in *Venus & Adonis* (10.503-59), Venus herself is pricked by Cupid's arrow and succumbs.

³⁵ We may at this point remember that, setting aside Venus' words about her overcoming even Juppiter and the various episodes in which Juppiter's lustful conquests are narrated, it is here stressed that Juppiter is Proserpina's father, not just the ruler of the gods, and so is implied at one stage to have either wooed, or at least had a lustful passion for Ceres.

Once again, as in the story of *Phaethon*, this leads us on to the idea of determinism, a concept here made into an explicit thematic point through the role of the Fates. Not only does Dis' ultimate success (although partial), and Ceres' ultimate failure (again partial) come about because of the power of love over the gods, but because the power of the Fates are depicted as above both that of Venus and the gods.³⁶ For example, Ceres does everything she can to recover her daughter, but the results of her actions are presented as being out of her control and in the hands of the Fates who are, as Juppiter's words here imply, the ultimate arbiters of one's destiny.

The superiority of the Fates over other characters, and their influence over the lives and destinies of individual characters, is far more prominent in this story than was the case in *Phaethon*. Here, they are used in an explicitly deterministic way. They are mentioned by both Juppiter (who refers to the decrees of the "*Parcarum*" 5.530-2) and the narrating Muse (who states just two lines later that although Ceres was determined to regain her daughter "not so did the fates allow" "*non ita fata sinunt*" 5.534) as directly determining Proserpina's fate. We also see acknowledgment of the Fates' ultimate power by implication of the instantaneous suspension of all endeavours of Venus, Dis, and Ceres after the Fates' condition has been broken and Juppiter makes his final decision to divide Proserpina between Dis and Ceres. It is highly unlikely that if the deterministic power of the Fates were not taken for granted by all of these characters, given the strength of their values, some would be dissatisfied enough by the outcome to make at least some kind of complaint. Ceres has, after all, only half recovered her daughter, Dis has his beloved for only half the year, and Venus has to some extent been foiled in her plans. Ceres in particular, although not initially convinced that justice was being done, seems surprisingly satisfied, "kindly Ceres, carefree with her daughter recovered" "*alma Ceres nata secura recepta*" (5.572).³⁷

³⁶ As Barchiesi (1999) notes, some aspects of the *Metamorphoses*' stories, and the sequence in which they are presented, are not about the superiority of Venus over the gods (as it first appears), but about "a limit set to her universal empire" (pp.116-7), i.e. Venus is above the gods but her power is still limited. Fuller discussions on the role of Venus in the *Metamorphoses* are given by Glenn (1986), p.145, who has a good summary of Venus' capricious, inconsistent nature; Stephens (1958a), pp.286-300; Albrecht (1999), pp.184-9; and (1982), pp.318-31; and Feeney (1991), pp.211-4.

³⁷ Further stories containing significant examples of even the gods being subject to the power of the Fates include: *The Raven & the Crow* (2.531-632, in which it is told how Phoebus, god of medicine – stated at 1.521ff – is unable to save a mortal against the Fates); *Ocyroe* (2.633-75, in which the Fates' power is implied as being above the gods by the future of both mortals and immortals being accurately prophesied); *Leucothoe & Clytie* (4.190-273, where Fate is said to have opposed Phoebus' efforts to revive Leucothoe); *Perseus* (4.604 – 5.249, in which Atlas brings trouble upon himself by trying to divert a prophecy); *Miletus* (9.418-53, after the gods

In addition, while the power of the Fates is another force to which the gods must submit, it should be noted that in contrast to those attempting to elude the power of love, it is not *because* Ceres desired or attempted to elude the Fates' adverse decrees that she did not gain her whole desire. We see in the tense of verbs used by both Jupiter and the narrator that this was determined *before* Ceres' request. When Jupiter says Proserpina may return, it is on condition that she has not *already* partaken "*contigit*" of Tartarean food (5.531), which the narrator states she already had "since the virgin had already satisfied her hunger" "*quoniam ieiunia virgo/ solverat*" (5.534-5). This suggests that the Fates at least are more impartial than the goddess of love.

Related to the issue of superior powers determining characters' lives, success, happiness, fates, and tied to the fact that the disdaining of the power of love can even make one targeted by it, is another significant factor in the presentation of the gods: their keen interest in how they are perceived by and treated by characters over whom their stature as leading gods gives them power. Apart from the cases of Venus' singling out of Dis and Proserpina on this account noted above, we also see this in the case of Ceres and her punishment of the youth who criticises her.³⁸ This aspect of the gods is present throughout the poem.³⁹ Consequently,

complain about the future just prophesied to them by Themis, Jupiter tells them that it is all according to the will of the Fates, and explicitly states that this cannot be overturned by the gods, including himself; the end of *Venus & Adonis* (10.708-39, in which it is implied through Venus' reproach to the Fates for killing Adonis); *Peleus & Thetis* (11.221-65, in which Jupiter implies it by being scared of Proteus' oracle); and that of *Julius Caesar* (15.745-870, in which we are told that the gods cannot alter the Fates' decrees to save Caesar. Jupiter himself asks Venus if she would challenge "insurmountable fate" "*insuperabile fatum*" 807, and says all is written in stone for Venus to peruse at her leisure, as Jupiter has).

On the restrictions put on the gods by external determining forces, see also Glenn (1986), pp.202-3, who, commenting on the Fates sections in Books 9 and 15, concludes that they are not well integrated, but serve primarily to diminish the stature of the gods; Kajanto (1961), who posits that the idea that the gods cannot change fate is not far from the idea that they do not have true free-will and that their characters, choices, and actions are in fact determined in advance (see pp.20-2, and n.49). See also Newlands (2005), p.479, on a different method of portrayal of the gods' limitations in the story of *Philemon & Baucis* (8.611-724).

³⁸ Evidenced by the fact that, as Tissol (1997) notes, the punishment is out of all proportion to the crime, adding that "so here is the lack of fellow-feeling, which one might expect Ceres, having lost her own child, to extend to the old woman" (p.208) – something which is undoubtedly influenced by Ceres' currently overwhelming emotions. See also Anderson (1997) on this passage.

³⁹ This is a key theme in the stories of: *Lycaon* (1.163-252); *Acoetes & the Lydian Sailors* (3.588-691); *Pentheus & Bacchus* (3.692-733); *The Daughters of Minyas* (4.389-415); *Arachne* (6.1-145, in which Minerva states, "to praise is not enough, may we ourselves be praised and not allow our divinity to be spurned without punishment" "*laudare parum est, laudemur et ipsae/ numina nec sperni sine poena nostra sinamus*" 6.3-4. The plurals are nosisms, although it is possible that she is thinking of a principle applicable to divinities in general); *Niobe* (6.146-312); *Atalanta & Hippomenes* (10.560-707); *Midas* (11.85-193); *The Companions of Diomedes* (14.454-511); and *The Apulian Shepherd* (14.512-26). The same thing is a prominent part in the stories of *Perseus* (4.604 – 5.249, in which Acrisius brings on trouble by denying both Bacchus and Perseus); *Achelous, the Naiads & Perimele* (8.574-610, in which the gods are presented as wrathful when neglected); and

even if a character has truth or innocence on their side, if they come into conflict with the gods, they are nevertheless likely to come to their ruin.⁴⁰

Lastly, we further see depicted in action three important themes already discussed in *Phaethon*: that of personal value being linked with emotion; that of the destructive nature of emotion; and the idea that the very holding of strong values is linked with destruction. The first of these is explicit in Ceres' personal value for Proserpina, which translates at the loss of her daughter into emotionalistic action during her search. The same theme is also implicit in the action of Dis' abducting Proserpina. With regard to the second theme, as was the case in *Phaethon*'s ride, the destruction brought about by emotion is not necessarily imparted on the one who behaves emotionally. Here, the results of Ceres' excessive, emotion-based actions during her search for Proserpina, is primarily destructive to the earth's peoples and crops (5.474-86), and the youth who insulted her.⁴¹ The third theme is evident in the case of Proserpina: if she had not so completely spurned the power of love as to be set on remaining a virgin and to follow in the footsteps of Minerva and Diana, she would not have been singled out as a target by Venus. Whether or not the same can be said for Dis is not quite clear – we do not know for sure that he *deliberately* distanced himself from the power of love, although this is implied by Venus' attitude towards him and his special selection as a target.

Now let us examine whether the themes discussed above are present in the minor stories (some of which have been touched upon above), and whether they underpin or are at least visible in their conflicts and their resolutions.

Firstly, *Cyane v. Dis*. Dis, having abducted Proserpina, comes up against the water nymph Cyane who blocks his path because she objects to his seizure of Proserpina by force. Cyane comes off worse because her arguments can have no power over one smitten by love and acting under the influence of emotion. Dis acts purely according to his emotions, and

Daedalion (11.291-345, in which Diana demands worship). Note also that although we do not see it in action in the text, it is foretold that Aesculapius will be killed because of his defiance of the gods (2.642ff).

⁴⁰ *Cadmus*' case (3.1-130, 4.563-603) is a prime example of this; he is pious and yet falls foul of the gods utterly unintentionally and by pure chance through his piety. Others who come into direct conflict with god and are in the right (that is, who have truth or innocence on their side), but who are presented as being ruined unjustly (or at least to an unjust extent), include the title characters in: *Daphne* (1.452-567); *Io* (1.568-746, including *Syrinx*, 689-712); *Callisto* (2.401-530); *The Raven & the Crow* (2.531-632); *Actaeon* (3.131-252); *Echo* (3.339ff); the victims of *The Plague at Aegina* (7.501-613); *Alcmena & Galanthis* (9.273-323); *Midas* (11.85-193); *Achilles* (12.580-628); *Scylla* (13.898-14.74); *Picus & Canens* (14.308-440). For examples of piety specifically bringing on a negative fate, see n.51.

⁴¹ See Hinds (1987), pp.107-8.

consequently has no concern or ability to stop and think about morality. The perceptual obstacle – Cyane’s attempted impediment – is his only concern. Once again the implication is that emotion is wholly divorced from reason. That she suffers a negative fate in this situation is also a reflection on the hierarchy of forces in the universe. Similarly, had she not been so insistent on the justness of her principles, this would not have occurred. Here we come upon a theme already observed: that excess value aids destruction.

Ceres v. the insulting youth. Ceres, distraught whilst searching for her daughter, comes into conflict with a brash youth who laughs at and mocks her for her great thirst. The transformation of the youth who insults Ceres comes about partly because of the goddess’ current emotional state – and consequent irrationality in the extent of her reactions – but more on account of the fact that he openly challenged a goddess. Here, it is nowhere implied that Ceres is in mortal disguise when she comes to the houses of mortals during her wanderings.⁴² On the contrary, the narrator states that the old woman sees the goddess “*anus divamque videt*” (5.449), not “her” or “Ceres.” Thus the taunt of the boy becomes almost certainly an open taunt to a goddess. The main theme found here is that the gods care very much about their image in the eyes of others, and make no bones about punishing those who spurn them or, more broadly, show them lack of respect or piety in any way.

The theme of emotion bringing destruction is present in the story of *Ceres v. the earth and its inhabitants*. During her search for her daughter, Ceres makes an emotional assumption, blames the lands for concealing Proserpina’s abduction, and consequently neglects the earth’s crops so that they become fallow. Once more we find the concept of determinism expressed implicitly. Here, the fates of the mortals have nothing to do with their characters; their success in farming does not necessarily lie in their skill in dealing with the conditions presented by nature, rather, the fertility of the crops are at the hands of the capricious gods.

The conflict between *Lyncus v. Triptolemus* comes about when the latter, a delegate of Ceres who, whilst re-fertilising the earth to repair the desolation Ceres had caused during her period of searching and grief, is attacked by Lyncus, who covets credit for the re-sowing himself. Here we also again see the negative consequences of a mortal defying an immortal, through the spurning of the gods implied within Lyncus’ murderous action.

⁴² As is the case in the *Homeric Hymn II to Demeter*.

Ceres v. Juppiter. Ceres, demanding justice and the return of her daughter, comes into conflict with Juppiter, who must choose between his regard for Ceres and his daughter, and his belief in the justness of Dis' action. The outcomes of this conflict again show the full extent of the powers of the Fates, which go above even Juppiter, and the power of love.

Proserpina v. Ascalaphus. Proserpina, having accidentally broken the condition upon which she would return to her mother, comes into conflict with the talkative Ascalaphus who informs on her with his tattling tongue. In Ascalaphus' transformation, we once again see the consequences of a goddess being defied by an inferior. It is also interesting to note that the gods' acceptance of the will of the Fates as superior is also implied in this story by its difference to other versions.⁴³ In all of the other extant accounts, it is Ceres who punishes Ascalaphus for foiling Proserpina's return. If this detail had been retained in the *Met.* version, Ceres' action, given the context, would imply something other than acceptance by the gods of the Fates as superior to themselves.

It is unclear what exactly happens in the story of the *Sirens*, and so the themes expressed in this story are somewhat obscure. The granting of the prayers for transformation uttered by these virgin handmaidens of Proserpina is possibly (although not explicitly stated to be) a reward for their continuing loyalty to their companion Proserpina.⁴⁴ However, the way in which the situation is described suggests that it was more a reward for piety to the gods, albeit a chance one: we are informed that when they prayed they *happened* to find the gods in a good mood "*facilesque deos habuistis*" (5.559).⁴⁵ Depending on which theory we follow, the theme explicit is either the virtue of selflessness, or the virtue of piety to the gods. Either way, both are consistent with themes already covered above and in the story of *Phaethon*.

Arethusa/Diana v. Alpheus/Venus. This conflict is particularly interesting, because although it does not stem from the main conflict, it does emphasise it, being a conflict based around unwanted amorous advances between superhuman figures. The actions and results of this

⁴³ These include the pre-Ovidian fragments of Euphorion of Chalcis (Loeb ed., "Select Papyri III", No. 121, 2a); and the post-Ovidian Apollod. *Lib.* 1.33, 2.124-6; and Serv. *ad Verg. Aen.* 4.462.

⁴⁴ Although Ovid presents this only as a possibility for the relationship between the Sirens and Proserpina (denoted by the "*an quia...?*" in 5.554, and this would be consistent with there being no mention by name of the Sirens in the abduction scene here or in the version of the tale found in the *Fasti*), the fact that such a suggestion is not original to Ovid but a common link (see Euripides, *Helen*, 167ff, and Ap. Rhod. *Arg.* 4.892ff) suggests that the reader would be expected to assume this as true.

⁴⁵ See Bömer (1969-86) for other instances of this unusual phrase. Interestingly Tissol (1997), with regard to the Sirens' transformation, speaks of their "crime" (p.207). I can only suppose he reads their transformation as a punishment by Venus for being Proserpina's handmaidens.

story reaffirm the idea of determinism, in that one's choices and moral character are not what determines one's fate. Arethusa stresses the fact that it is only her good looks (in which she herself took no pleasure) that brought on Alpheus' attentions, and conversely only her connection with Diana which helps her escape. It will be at once evident that Arethusa's fate is almost completely *opposite* to that of Proserpina, whose tale is in many ways extremely similar.⁴⁶ The significance of this is discussed below.⁴⁷

As a final point in our survey of the stories contained in Calliope's song, it is noteworthy that the explicit themes expressed by the characters, their actions, and what results, are in general far less to do with choices and actions of individual characters, than the relationships between the various forces active in the universe. This is consistent with the fact that, with the exception of Ceres, the characterisations given are only skeletal. This also ties into what we saw earlier about the seemingly indifferent present in portrayal (or lack thereof) of their fates. All this is by no means accidental, but stems logically from the fact that it is the themes explicit in the actions and results of these stories that are important for the Muses' purpose, as discussed in *1. Introduction*.

6. Overall Philosophical Outlook.

Let us now apply what we have found so far to the discovery of the poem's overall philosophical outlook. Again, we will start with what is implied about the views inherent within it in the realm of metaphysics.

⁴⁶ See Fratantuono (2011), pp.139-40.

⁴⁷ Arethusa's happy ending, brought about by the goddess Diana, who is herself a virgin goddess, brings about the question of how such goddesses and their power fit into the idea of the power of love being superior to the gods. If we consider the like case of Minerva, her safe rejection of the powers of Venus is understandable within the bounds of the universe presented. By this I mean that love has been associated both with emotion, the irrational, and the quality of being ungovernable, and it is therefore only logical that the rational and intelligible should be separate from it, and that Minerva, being the goddess of wisdom and learning, should personify these things and be able to separate herself from that which is opposite to her sphere of influence. Thus it is no coincidence that she has chosen to be a virgin goddess, and deliberately distanced herself from that which is associated with emotion, namely lust and love, and so provides an example of a type of character which by its very nature can remain immune to the powers of love. The two goddesses, Venus and Minerva, are in fact personifications of the two halves of the mind-body dichotomy depicted as being inherent in mortal and immortal alike. The cases of Diana and the Muses are similar; both embody perfection in a certain area of skill (hunting and the arts) and are understandably depicted as separate from emotion, subjectivity, and physical pleasures. With regard to this aspect of Diana's portrayal, see *Actaeon* (3.138-255); the myth of *Callisto* as given in *Fasti*, 2.163ff, where the virginity of Diana is emphasized; and Ovid's treatment of the Hippolytus myth in *Heroides* 4.

Firstly, the presence of a mind-body dichotomy is once again noticeable in the essence of both the major and minor stories' events, characters, and actions. This dichotomy is explicitly emphasised by the separation of conscious thought (the mind) and blind emotion (the body) in the characters' motivations for their actions. It is, for instance, the power of Venus – love, *emotion*, physical desire – that overcomes even Dis, causes him to act as he does with respect to Proserpina, and brings him into conflict with (and triumph over) Cyane, who objects on purely moral grounds to what he is doing. This same power triumphs over Alpheus, and is directly linked to physical desire. Unsurprisingly, it is the physical aspects of each scenario on which the narrator focuses. Again this dichotomy manifests itself in the case of Ceres. She submits the direction of her actions to emotion, rather than reason. In her deepest grief, Ceres is out of her senses “*amentia*” (5.511), and is so completely under the influence of her emotions that she lashes out, in a manner beyond all proportion to the crime, at the brash youth for mocking the thirst she has developed from her tireless attempts to find and recover her daughter. In a similar fashion, the extent of Ceres' grief and emotion is the cause for her unjustified anger and infliction of famine upon the earth.

Another concept explicit in this story, and which we have already observed in *Phaethon* – although to a lesser extent – is the presentation of a hierarchy of forces within the universe. Nearly all of the story's conflicts embody a metaphysical imbalance of power between the characters.⁴⁸ This usually plays a key part in the resolution of these conflicts. This hierarchy begins with the superiority (in both power and authority) of gods over mortals; the former being depicted as far greater in terms of metaphysical efficacy than the latter and, more importantly, have both the capability and tendency to punish those who defy or ignore them. We also see this hierarchy in the form of some gods being superior to other lesser divinities. Most of this story's conflicts contain one greater and one lesser divine power, and the results (always to the detriment of the lesser), and the manner of their occurrence, directly reflect the imbalance of power between these figures.

A further level of this hierarchy comes in the form of the power of love (which, when personified, is later in the poem described as the greatest god “*maximus... deus*” 7.55) over the gods. This is an even more conspicuous aspect of the hierarchy than those listed above.

⁴⁸ The case of Arethusa and Alpheus is a potential exception – both being minor divinities – although Diana's involvement in this story's resolution again reflects the metaphysical superiority of some divinities over others.

Venus is the character responsible for the inciting incident which spurs Ceres on to drive the plot, the antagonist of this story's main conflict, and it is the reassertion of Venus' power (here, specifically over gods) that is her main aim. She successfully achieves this through the inflaming of even such a great god as Dis with love, resulting in his abduction of Proserpina, and the chaos that is caused on earth as an ultimate consequence. We further see this level of the hierarchy in the cases of the characters (such as Dis and Proserpina) who attempt to avoid love and are consequently especially targeted to be brought under its influence. As observed earlier, part of the reason why such complete overrunning by love can occur, stems from the idea of the inherent mind-body dichotomy of which Ovid's characters are presented as embodying. Jupiter effectively states this openly when he excuses Dis' actions to Ceres, implying that love is not something chosen, but an unavoidable force which has nothing to do with a character's volitional choices.

Finally, we have the power of the Fates depicted explicitly as being superior over all, including love and the gods – a level of the hierarchy discussed in detail above.

Taken individually, and as a whole, these factors again imply a deterministic view of the universe present in the poem's philosophical outlook, because all of them, in one way or another, effectively take whatever success, failure, happiness, and misery that characters lower down in the hierarchy may have, out of their hands. The fates that they have do not stem from their characters, choices, or actions.

The philosophical concept of determinism can also be seen in the completely opposite fates undergone by similar sorts of characters, with similar motives, in similar circumstances. For example, consider the cases of Proserpina, who is presented as desiring a life of virginity and following in the footsteps of Minerva and Diana, and that of Arethusa, who aspires to perpetual virginity, at least by implication, being a subject of Diana and one who calls upon her in her hour of need.

Taken in isolation, the fact that it is only Arethusa's association with Diana which helps her escape, suggests that her fate reflects a moral aspect of this connection. The almost completely *opposite* fate of Proserpina, which is a direct result of her attitude of rejection towards Venus, shows that the morality of their respective attitudes is not the primary factor which determines the differences in their fates, although it does seem to be the case in each individually. There are clearly differences in the circumstances of their abduction, but if these

are to be taken as the cause of their different endings, the themes of these stories, taken individually, become qualified by very specific circumstances. As we will see over the course of this thesis, this is not reflective of the *Metamorphoses* in general. Also in opposition to such an idea is the fact that both the themes found of piety being rewarded and spurning of the gods being punished, are present throughout the poem.⁴⁹ The explanation for what is going on here is nevertheless relatively simple. While both characters are in one sense being pious to one idea (and thus the goddesses Minerva and Diana), they are in another sense being impious (to Venus). The fact that one character is rewarded and the other is not, shows two things: that even though gods may reward piety, this is not a hard and fast rule (implying that regardless of one's moral virtues, characters' fates are – as far as they are concerned – up to chance, being determined by the caprice of the gods); and that what is accepted as moral (as piety towards the gods is here and throughout the poem), can in itself be contradictory (discussed in *Phaethon* above).

This is indicative of the *Metamorphoses* in general. While we see a number of examples of piety being rewarded, we also see a number in which it is not,⁵⁰ and even a number in which it can even draw on a profoundly negative fate (something that we will see again in even greater clarity in the situation of Althaea in the story of *Meleager*).⁵¹ Moreover, there is no

⁴⁹ See n.39 for examples of gods punishing those who spurn them. Further notable examples of prayer or other piety to the gods being rewarded occur in the stories of: *Deucalion* (1.377-80), in which the idea is presented that prayers of the pious can placate the gods' anger; *The Raven and Crow* (2.578-80), where a virgin prays and a virgin goddess heeds her prayers; *Narcissus* (3.339-510), in which the just "iustis" (3.406) prayer of the youths concerning Narcissus are heeded by Rhamnusia, to Narcissus' detriment; *The Lydian Sailors* (3.588-691), in which Acoetes is spared by Bacchus for his fear and respect for the divine; *Salmacis & Hermaphroditus* (4.274-388), who both make various prayers to the gods that are heeded; *Cadmus* (3.1-130, 4.563-603), in which the hero prays that if it was a sacred serpent that he killed, he too may become one (4.571-5); *Erysichthon*, in which Achelous (8.743-5) mentions a tree with stuff hanging on it in token of granted prayers; *Iphis* (9.666-797), in which prayer and obedience to the divine by Iphis' mother is rewarded; *Atalanta & Hippomenes* (10.560-707), the latter of which is helped on account of his prayers to Venus; *Midas* (11.85-193), in which the king is pious with regard to the gods and consequently rewarded twice by Bacchus; *The Greeks at Aulis* (12.1-38), in which Diana takes pity on the innocent victim of a pious sacrifice; *Myscelus* (15.1-59), who is ultimately saved from death by the divine Hercules' aid as a reward for his piety; *Egeria* (15.547-51), who is taken pity on by Diana for her pious suffering; *Aesculapius* (15.622-744), in which Apollo and his son help ease the suffering of Roman citizens because of the pious prayers; and *Cipus* (15.552-621), who appeases the gods with his piety, acts piously consistently, and achieves happiness as a reward (or at least we assume so – see Galinsky, 1967).

⁵⁰ We see this in cases of characters such as the pious bystanders in stories such as that of *Perseus'* suitor-slaughterer who, although loving justice and revering the gods, dies just as gruesomely as the rest of the suitors (5.99-106); and pious figures such as *Hecuba* (13.429-575), who sacrifices herself for her countrymen, and who yet achieves nothing for herself or those for whom she cares as a consequence. In such cases their piety does not help their chances of happiness, chance may still and is even likely to change things for the worse.

⁵¹ Stories containing additional examples of piety putting characters into contradictory situations and thus (potentially) aiding destruction, include the following: *The Raven and Crow* (2.531-632), in which a bird reveals

unifying factor in the characters or their actions, or the contexts of their respective situations, which determines whether one or the other will be the case. Broadly speaking, while a character's actions and principles held may be depicted as virtuous and as theoretically likely to give them a better likelihood of success and happiness in life or a positive fate, such virtues are in reality presented as ineffective. What is nevertheless certain is that one's morality is not the primary factor in one's fate. That, in effect, is up to chance.

This leads on to a further issue important throughout the poem; that although some characters are presented as virtuous in the realms of morality and piety, and are seemingly portrayed as deserving a positive fate as a consequence, such positive fates, when they do come, do not necessarily stem from their positive actions, but are effectively chance occurrences. The inverse is true with undeserved negative consequences.

The story of the Sirens is a perfect example of this. Even if they are rewarded for their actions, the *chance* of finding the gods in a good mood is emphasised, and the resulting transformation, while presented as being deserved, is not a logical sequitur.

This is not the only case in which the role of chance plays a significant part in Calliope's song. For example, Proserpina's partial escape from Dis comes about not through her virtues,

to the goddess Pallas that she has been disobeyed, and is as a consequence transformed in a moment of capricious anger on the goddess' part; *Cadmus* (3.1-130, 4.563-603), discussed above, speaking of whose case Glenn (1986) says something applicable to most of these stories: that "Piety provides dilemmas" (pp.29ff) because what is right in one god's eyes can be wrong in those of another; *Pentheus' relations* (3.692-733), who rip Pentheus apart in the service of a god, Bacchus – an action Bacchus himself punishes for their excesses; *The Daughters of Minyas* (4.389-415), in which we see that piety to gods can itself be contradictory and lead to destruction, because being pious to one god, can lead to conflict with others; *Procne* (6.412-674), who, although she holds that it is wicked to be pious to such a husband as Tereus (6.635), commits a comparable crime in wreaking revenge upon him through the act of killing his and her son; *The Daughters of Aeson*, whose especial filial piety allows them to be tricked into impious murder for their efforts. That it is their piety which allowed this to happen is emphasised by the juxtaposition of words of piety and impiety "*pia*" "*impia*" "*ne... scelerata*" "*scelus*" (7.339-40); the story of the *Maenads* (11.1-84), it is Bacchus himself who punishes and transforms them for their behaviour towards Orpheus (who we are told was a priest of his own rites 11.68). He disowns them for their behaviour; in the story of *Ceyx & Alcyone* (11.410-748), the extent of Ceyx's piety even aids his destruction. If Ceyx had not been so pious, he would neither have been prompted to go on a journey to consult an oracle, nor been so steadfastly resolved to do so against his wife's wishes, and thus avoided the death that eventually overcame him; in the story of *The Greeks at Aulis* (12.1-38), pious duty to the gods' commands and to the common cause is in direct opposition to Agamemnon's pious duty as a father. The contradiction is presented as inherent in the code of morality to which Agamemnon is pious. Nevertheless, the intervention of a god can sometimes extricate one from this dilemma; this last point is also true in the case of *Myrcellus*, who obeys a god's command, and comes into conflict with his country's laws, to the extent of being sentenced to death, as a consequence (15.20ff). In the vast majority of cases, these characters specifically open themselves up to the caprice (often of a tragic nature) of fate by their very virtue. If they were not respectively chaste, dutiful, pious, valuing of justice and modest, they would not have come into conflict with and be susceptible to the displeasure of higher powers.

but purely by chance of having a mother who cared about her enough to lay claim on a father who happened to be one with authority over Dis. Conversely, it is the seemingly arbitrary and unchangeable intervention of the Fates which allows Venus partial success (and Ceres' partial failure). Without them, her target Proserpina could have escaped through Juppiter's decrees⁵² – over which Dis would be required to yield. This is emphasised by the fact that it is not the act of eating the pomegranate seed that made Proserpina stay in Tartatus (i.e. did not bind her to the place or that world), but rather that this was seen and related by Ascalaphus “he saw, and took away her return with his hard-hearted evidence” “*vidit et indicio reditum crudelis ademit*” (5.542).⁵³ Chance is also relevant in the case of Alpheus. As we saw in Phaethon, excess passion and subjective action is likely under normal circumstances to bring one logically to ruin. Alpheus, for all his passion, is an exception. He acts subjectively and emotionally but without coming to a negative ending. This, being an exception to the general rule of the link between emotion and destruction, and being unexplained, appears to be mere chance.

When the above cases are taken together, the overall picture that emerges is as follows. Certain characters come to fates (sometimes deserved, sometimes not) which are shown to be logically brought about by certain factors (such as their characters, morals or values, thoughts, choices or actions – or those of the gods – or aspects of their circumstances or natures). Other characters come to diametrically opposite endings, even though the same factors which brought on the positive endings of other characters are present. By implication then, the differences between the fates of individual characters is presented as unintelligible and, as far as they or the reader is concerned, the results of mere chance.⁵⁴

All of this again expresses determinism. Irrespective of the above characters' qualities or failings, what happens to them merely reflects the power of external determining agencies. The endings that they have only sometimes come about as direct or logical results of their values, morality or actions – sometimes it is simply luck. In short, what determines

⁵² Juppiter, whose (almost) supreme and unquestionable power was also only a result of chance, being decided by lot “*sorte*” (see 2.291, 5.529). Additionally, consider 5.268, where this division of power is said by Venus to have occurred according to “*Fortuna*.”

⁵³ See Anderson (1997) on this passage.

⁵⁴ In describing a character's fate as occurring by “chance”, I use the term solely in the sense of an occurrence which lacks a cause that can be ascertained, understood, foreseen or controlled, that is, for which there appears to be an “absence of design or assignable cause” (*O.E.D.*).

characters' lives is unintelligible, and beyond their ability to consciously control or direct, or predict.

Given that we are moving towards the issue of the efficacy of morality, let us turn now to the topic of ethics. Once again in this story, we have examples of certain duties and values being carried out and pursued as if they are intrinsically moral. For example, the parental devotion in Ceres' value for her daughter is here, as in *Phaethon*, accepted and represented positively as an intrinsic virtue – neither shown to stem from any independent judgement or to be the results of subjective action. The intrinsic, selfless, dutiful aspect of the action is highlighted through lack of information given about Proserpina's personal qualities or the closeness of her relationship with her mother, and yet her loss reveals a passionate love on the part of her parent. Also implied to be intrinsically moral (by implication of having nothing to do with selfishness, emotion or independence) is that one should respect, fear, and be obedient towards one's superiors, particularly if they are gods. This is implied by contrast in the cases of the brash youth towards Ceres; Ascalaphus towards Proserpina; Proserpina and Dis towards Venus; and Lyncus towards Triptolemus and Ceres. Likewise, it is suggested that the attitude of modesty, humility and disdain for one's own qualities found in Arethusa's story (5.580-4) is a self-evident intrinsic virtue, since it is clearly unselfish and apparently not influenced by emotion.

Something more that we can glean in this story which we were not able to see in that of *Phaethon*, is the intrinsic source of morality. Here, several characters' words and actions shows that what is intrinsically moral, just, true, is that which is mandated by the gods of Fates. We have, for example, seen the Muses state that Ceres was the first to give laws "*prima dedit leges*" (5.343), and in the actions of this story (and notably that of Minerva and Arachne which follows), it is confirmed that what justice there is in reality, is determined by Juppiter and the Fates.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Further examples of characters holding such an approach from stories not already covered in depth include those of: *Deucalion* – whose father Prometheus (alluded to at 1.390) is traditionally depicted as having the power of unerring prophecy – states that oracles are sacred ("*pia*" which I take here as "morally upright") and never advocate wickedness (1.192). Additionally, the narrator tells us that long-standing tradition "*vetustas*" bears witness to the marvellous tale related (1.400). In short, the idea here is that morality is intrinsic and comes from the authority of oracles, and truth (potentially) from "*vetustas*"; the case of *Iphis*' mother who, following the goddess Isis' commands, tricks her husband with pious fraud "*pia mendacia fraude*" (9.711) is similar. The language implies that since the deception is committed at the goddess' bidding, it is moral; in the story of *Myscelus* (15.1-59), the positive results of following the directives of the gods even when opposed to those of man – no matter how moral they may seem – presents morality stemming from the gods as superior

Nevertheless, being able to identify individual character' approach to morality is, in this story, because of the lack of focus on characterisation, no easier; we do not really get to know enough about characters to tell what approaches to morality they hold. As observed above, two characters whose approaches we can to an extent categorise are Dis and Ceres. Since we are given to believe that neither are normally given to acting according to their emotions, but both do so for a significant portion of the story, both can be classified as part-time subjectivists, although what kind of morality they hold when not overcome by emotion is unclear.

Other characters, such as Cyane, Lyncus, and Alpheus are even harder to place, and could be examples of the third distinct approach to morality found in the *Metamorphoses*, that which I will for the rest of this thesis label the *mixed* approach. This approach is discussed in depth in the next chapter, but to summarise briefly, the *mixed* approach is depicted through characters whose words and actions show that they are, as with those who hold an intrinsic approach, aware of their actions, and the issue of morality, but who attempt to determine and validate the moral code underpinning their choices, values and actions *independently*, without reference to and often in spite of that which is depicted as intrinsic.⁵⁶

While there is not enough information given about the characters of Cyane, Lyncus and Alpheus to determine for certain what approach they hold, a mixed approach is plausible in each case. While Cyane could be upholding morals that she considers intrinsic when attempting to obstruct Dis, she could be acting on a moral code arrived at and decided upon independently. That she is not acting subjectively is shown by the fact that she is aware of the issue of morality, and is acting according to certain defined principles. Lyncus is likewise unplaceable – we are not given enough information to tell whether his attempt to take Triptolemus' glory stems solely from his emotions, or whether he has decided independently that the gods are not worthy of worship and guest murder is acceptable. Alpheus' character is in the same boat; he could be acting completely subjectively, or could have consciously decided that it was moral to follow his emotions (as we will see Scylla doing in the next

to that of man; and throughout the speech of the figure of *Pythagoras* (15.60-478), who claims divine inspiration for his story, the idea that morality is intrinsic and comes from the gods is presented, although Pythagoras' speech itself as a reflection of the divine can be called into question. However, through the narrator's statement that Numa, having heard Pythagoras' speech and others, returned home blessed with the guidance of the Muses (15.479-84) and taught sacrificial rites and the arts of peace, the idea that morality is intrinsic, stems from the divine, and is known through authorities, is strongly suggested.

⁵⁶ Examples of this type of character will be given in the next chapter in the discussion of the story of *Scylla*, whose title character is a perfect exponent of this approach to morality.

chapter). Either way, the point made earlier about his fate being an exception to the rule of emotion leading to destruction stands firm.

In the cases of a number of the characters in this series of stories, we also see examples of key aspects of certain characters' approach to morality being essential to their destruction or failure, thus undercutting the efficacy of their respective approaches to morality. For example, Dis is destructive to his own interests in that it is because he merely followed his emotions without considering context or consequences, a key factor in the approach of those acting on a subjectivist morality. This idea is also found in the case of Lyncus, whose approach has, if subjective, caused him to become blind to the context and consequences of his actions, or, if mixed, has made him ignore the intrinsic virtues of reverence to gods and good treatment of guests. Either way, ruin ensues.

A further concept is raised in the figure of Arethusa, in that it is her good looks that bring on Alpheus' unwanted attentions. This is an instance of a broader trend found throughout the *Metamorphoses*, that characters who have qualities or skills to a degree significantly beyond the expected norm, whether that be in physical appearance, mental or physical capabilities, or special powers, are presented as enticing conflict and detrimental results specifically through these qualities and skills – irrespective of whether these attributes are naturally endowed, god given, or the product of conscious development. Sometimes these conflicts and detrimental results come through the gods, and sometimes without them. In general, either their excessive talents are tied to (or lead to) a hubristic attitude, selfishness, arrogance, over confidence, and impiety, which consequently makes them likely to desire to step outside the normal bounds expected of them, or their exceptional aspects invite jealousy, unwanted attention, hostility and conflict from those their attributes rival or excite.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Further examples of characters' qualities which fall under this category include: *Daphne's* beauty (1.489); *Ocyroe's* skill of telling the future (2.657ff); *Tiresias's* knowledge, specifically of what it is like to be both man and woman (3.316-38); *Perdix's* cleverness and creativity (8.236-59); *Caeneus's* invulnerability (in the story of the Lapiths and Centaurs, 12.210-535); the same goes (by implication) for *Achilles* (12.580-611); the prosperity of the *Daughters of Anius* (13.632-74). The general principle is summed up in the story of *Pythagoras* (15.60-478), in which it is stated explicitly that beauty is a bane "*nam placuisse nocet*" (15.131). To this can be added cases of characters who have special qualities, talents, attributes and whose own high opinion of these brings them trouble. For instance, *Daedalion's* beauty (11.291-345), which, while initially bringing good things, incites pride and hubris in herself, and thus divine punishment (see particularly 11.320). In the same vein there is *Narcissus's* excess pride "*superbia*" (3.354), so that he never loved anyone but himself, brought him a curse that ultimately turned his pride into nothingness; in *Ino & Athamas* (4.416-562), Ino's pride in her family's success and happiness brings on the gods' wrath; in *Arachne's* case (6.1-145), the artist thinks herself to be better than the goddess Pallas and, in contrast to what we anticipate in the lead-up Pierides' story, is shown to be justified.

Not far from this is the idea already observed in *Phaethon* that the holding of strong values can and is likely to be destructive and detrimental. We have seen this in the cases of Proserpina, Cyane, and most likely – although not definitely – Dis.

Finally, it is interesting to note that although individual choices, motives, and fates of characters are not the focus of the Muses' stories, there is an indifference to suffering found within them which seems to go beyond this. This indifference is present regardless of the circumstances of characters' fates. This can be seen most obviously in the fate of Proserpina, who is neither given a particularly negative treatment or presented as deserving what happens to her. However, despite Proserpina's innocence (in the eyes of the narrator), no time is given to lamenting her fate or the unjustness of what happened to her. Given the Muses' attitude towards the violence that had recently been offered them, one would expect more sympathy for a character in their tale that was put in such a similar situation. Detachment is also present in Dis and Venus' cases. We never find out what kind of existence Dis suffered in the long run as a consequence of the events of this story, nor do we find out Venus' feelings at her success. In both cases, the Muse does not seem to care.

Indifference can also be found in the fate of Cyane,⁵⁸ and in the lack of apparent sympathy present in the depiction of the great destruction caused to the lands, peoples and crops by Ceres' conscious neglect, all of which is narrated in detail, and yet the great suffering the people affected by it endured as a consequence is almost completely ignored. Given that we find the same thing in *Phaethon* (and indeed is a trend common to the majority of the fates of the *Metamorphoses'* characters), this aspect of these tales clearly reflects more than just the Muses' characters, or the context and purpose in which they tell these stories.

She is punished not for wrongly thinking herself to be equal to or better than the gods, but for being right (see Albrecht, 1999, p.160); Similarly, in *Niobe's* case (6.146-312), we are told by the narrator (6.155-6) that she would have been a perfect mother, if she had not thought herself so. It is her excessive self-esteem and pride "*superbia*" (6.184) that facilitates her ruin. The case of the Pierides, whose story introduces that which Calliope tells, is directly comparable to a number of these.

⁵⁸ Particularly in the scene dealing with the nymph's disintegration. Although the Muse begins relating the tragic transformation with pathos, she goes on to list the details of the transformation at a length sufficient to bring the audience's focus onto the transformation, rather than the tragedy. The focus here is less on *what* happens, than the details of *how* it happens, and so distances the reader from sympathising with the character undergoing the negative fate. See Anderson (1997) on 5.431-5, and Glenn (1986) pp.65ff. For a contrasting view see Otis (1970), pp.53ff. While this is not exactly unexpected in a work about metamorphoses, this suggests that the style of writing and the technical aspects of these stories are more important than meaning or their adding up to be a unified artwork. In other words, aspects of form come before their function. The attention to detail, and the care with which each word, phrase, and image in this story is selected, integrated, and has purpose (and subtly interplays with earlier literature), has been discussed thoroughly by Hinds (1987).

This indifference is consistent with the way humour is used in these stories to equally cut down all the characters we would expect to be treated reverently.⁵⁹ For example, the anecdote that Proserpina, whilst being abducted, grieved over such a thing as the loss of her recently gathered flowers (5.400-1), although explicitly emphasising her youth and naiveté, also serves to undercut her stature as a goddess by its absurdity.⁶⁰ Again with Cyane, the image painted is that of a reasonably insignificant nymph, standing waist deep in a pond, trying to hinder by persuasion the king of the underworld riding full tilt in his chariot from continuing carrying out his abduction: a ridiculous picture and one which also pokes fun at Cyane's idea of herself, for thinking that she could achieve such a thing – the truth of which is emphasised by the ease with which Dis overcomes her.⁶¹ To this we may add the undercutting of the narrating Muses, partly by the unconscious incongruity in the content of their song to its obviously deliberate purposes (see *1. Introduction*).

Summary

Throughout the above analysis we see a number of philosophical ideas that have already been observed in *Phaethon* as inherent in the text. These include the depiction of individual characters – both mortal and divine – as being subject to an inherent metaphysical dichotomy between the mind and the body (reason and emotion); and the concept of determinism, implied by the irreconcilable nature of this dichotomy, and the hierarchy of forces present within the universe, each having a different level of metaphysical efficacy. In this hierarchy, we see the presentation of gods as superior to mortals, some gods as superior to other lesser divinities, the power of love as above even the gods, and the power of the Fates reigning supreme above all. Also important is the presentation of the gods as particularly concerned about how they are treated by their inferiors (or at least those over whom they believe they should have power). Their retribution is dire upon those who challenge or spurn them or their sphere of influence. This is particularly obvious in the case of Venus, who particularly targets those who attempt to avoid the power of love.

⁵⁹ See *Introduction*, n.20 for discussion on the use of humour within the *Metamorphoses*.

⁶⁰ For another opinion, see Otis (1970), who states that such details are there only as a contrast to "Pluto's stern appearance and violent passion" (p.52). See also Segal (1969a), p.34.

⁶¹ The comic undercutting in Cyane's depiction is noted by Glenn (1986), p.66. See also Otis (1966), pp.329-30, who makes good observations on the humorous undercutting of the divine in general (including specifically Dis and Ceres) in this story.

Consequently, piety is depicted as inherently being at least potentially contradictory, and the holding of strong values (whether associated with an intrinsic or non-intrinsic approach to morality) is presented as being likely to encourage misery and destruction, both to oneself and others. Similarly, characters who possess qualities beyond the norm – whether in skill, appearance, or abilities – are shown to entice conflict and detrimental results specifically through these qualities. As a corollary to this, we see that although most characters are likely to come to negative fates, whether positive or negative, these are not presented as likely to be tied to a character's morality. We see this through characters with similar principles to morality coming to vastly different fates even in remarkably similar situations. The underlying idea is that chance features significantly in the outcomes of these stories. This is consistent with the indifference tone in which characters fates, whether positive or negative, are treated, although this is most noticeable in passages depicting suffering.

Taken as a whole, this story is about limitations and negative fates, and reflects directly on the context in which it was originally told by the Muse Calliope. More importantly, as we have seen (and will continue to see in the following chapters), the fact that the themes and underlying philosophical ideas present in this story are consistent with what we find throughout the *Metamorphoses*, confirms that these are not merely a reflection on the views of the internal narrators, but are indicative of the poem's broader underpinning philosophical outlook.

Chapter 3 – Scylla

The story of *Scylla* (8.1-151), in contrast to both *Phaethon* and *Ceres*, is based solely around the choices and actions of mortals, and although its ramifications are broad, they are not world-scale. Like *Phaethon*, it is told by the poem's overall narrating voice. It runs without digression and, like *Ceres*, the characters' fates are both positive and tragic. The conflict is simple and over a moral issue.

Although this story is both the first we have discussed which deals specifically with the choices and actions of mortals, and the first to have as its primary focus a solely moral issue, it expresses very much the same kind of philosophical outlook that we have seen to be present in the two vastly different stories discussed above. Nevertheless, this story adds to our understanding of this outlook in several ways. In *Scylla*, we see the clearest example yet of an inherent inner metaphysical dichotomy between mind and body (reason and emotion), both of which point in totally different directions and are irreconcilable by the use of reason. Through this, it is clearly depicted that the principles, morals and values associated with the approach to morality Scylla holds (the *mixed* approach, which holds certain morals and values as necessary to be upheld and pursued, although they are determined and validated independently), which are predominantly based around independent judgement and self-interest, are in stark contrast and even in opposition to those associated with the intrinsic approach (which holds that certain morals and values are intrinsically right, good, just, worthy of pursuit), which are based around duty and selflessness. We also see that the mixed approach is likely, because it is linked with independent judgement, to be subverted by emotion and lead to selfish and irrational actions. Consequently, it is as far from the intrinsic approach as is the subjective, and just as likely to lead to negative results.

A further aspect of the poem's overall philosophical outlook, which we have only partially discussed before, is the role of *chance*. Chance features majorly in the results of these stories and implies that irrespective of whether the distinction is made between virtue and vice, and characters who deserve their fates and those who do not, characters' approaches to morality

are not a major factor in their respective outcomes. They should not be expected to bring about certain results. This, along with the presentation of emotions as primaries – as feelings over which characters have and have had no choice or influence and which do not stem from characters’ value-judgements, but are the foundations of these – and as therefore likely to subvert one’s reason and take one’s fate out of one’s control, once again implies the deterministic aspect of the poem’s overall philosophical outlook. Finally, tied to this is the attitude of indifference to suffering, as well as to both virtue and vice, present in the treatment of the results of these characters.

1. Introduction¹

The main features of the *Metamorphoses* version of the story are as follows: Minos and his army, waging war on account of his son’s death, are attacking Megara, the city of Nisus, who has on his head a lock of purple hair, with which rests the safety of his kingdom “*magnum fiducia regni*” (8.10). Scylla, Nisus’ daughter, falls in love with Minos and, after much internal debate, decides to pledge this love by cutting off her father’s lock and giving the city up to the enemy. This she does, but Minos rejects Scylla as despicable and, after taking the city, leaves without her. She tries to follow but is attacked by her father who has turned into a bird, whereupon a similar transformation of Scylla follows.

Of the other ancient treatments of this myth,² most agree with regard to the majority of the main facts, although we do see variations in things such as: whether Scylla had an agreement with Minos before doing the deed; how and why Minos punished Scylla for her crime; what became of Scylla’s body; and whether or not Nisus died when his lock was cut off. There are several important points to be made with regard to which versions are followed in the

¹ Forbes Irving (1990) gives a good account of the history of the myth. See also Hollis (1970), in his introduction to the Scylla tale (pp.32-5). As a side note, it is interesting that Ovid’s treatment of this tale is not one which has attracted much scholarly attention and, when it is discussed, it is usually only as a foil with which to compare the Pseudo-Vergilian *Ciris* and Propertius 4.4. The main character of the latter, Tarpeia, is often thought to be modelled off an early (and now lost) version of the Scylla story. Both of these works appear to be major influences on Ovid’s version of this tale. For the former, see Lyne (1971, 1978); Clark (1973); Knox (1990); Houseman (1903); Otis (1970), pp.62-5; and Crump (1931), pp.154-177. For the latter, see Tissol (1997), pp.143-53; Hollis (1970); and Forbes Irving (1990), pp.226-8.

² Aes. *Choe.* 612-22; Callim. *Hec. frag.* 288; Parth. *frag.* 20 from *Schol. ad Dionysius Periegetes*, 420; Strabo 8.6; Verg. *Ec.* 6.74, *Georg.* 1.404-9; (Pseudo-Verg.) *Ciris*; Prop. 3.21-8, 4.4.39; Apollod. *Lib.* 3.210-1; Hyg. *Fab.* 198, 242, 255; Non. *Dion.* 25.148-67; Serv. *ad Verg. Aen.* 6.286, *Ec.* 6.74; Paus. 1.19.4, 2.34.7; *Schol. ad Eurip. Hip.* 1200. Ovid himself mentions it elsewhere in *Am.* 3.12.21-2, *Ars Am.* 1.331, *Trist.* 2.393-4, *I.* 361-2, and *Rem. Am.* 68, 737. With regard to the visual representations of the myth, see the introduction to Hollis (1970).

Metamorphoses version, and these will be dealt with later in the discussions of Scylla and Minos, and the themes made explicit from the results of this story and their causes.

It should be noted that this episode is technically not isolated in the narrative of the *Metamorphoses*, being the introduction to Book 8 and integrated into it thematically. It is also a tangent in the story of Minos, which starts at 7.456, where he is presented as going out to revenge the death of his son and seeking aid from all and sundry along the way, and fades away amidst the story of *Daedalus & Icarus* escaping from Crete. However, since Minos serves more as a tool by which stories can be introduced (such as that of *Cephalus & Procris*, *The Minotaur*, *Ariadne*, *Daedalus & Icarus*) and is only referred to once more after the start of the Daedalus episode – and that is as a weak and fearful old man who only just maintains control of his throne (9.434-46)³ – I treat this story as if it were an isolated episode, since it is not so much integrated plot-wise to its surroundings as we saw in cases of the minor stories in *Ceres, Dis & Proserpina*.⁴

2. Conflict

As in the story of *Ceres, Dis & Proserpina*, there are several characters who could be considered main and who are all in conflict with each other in various ways. These are Scylla, Nisus and Minos. Once again, although only two make the key decisions at the story's climax, all are essential to the enactment of the main conflict.

While the conflict between Nisus and Minos, who is attacking Nisus' city, is the most obvious and explicit conflict, it is not the event around which the story revolves, but that within which it is set; it is merely used to set up the situation and bring the main characters to the situation at which the story begins. It is clear from the introduction that the story is to focus on and revolve around Scylla. Indeed, she is the protagonist; it is her decisions which move the story and her actions that drive the conflicts contained within it. Moreover, it is her actions and decisions at the key moments that bring about the fates of the respective parties in this story: her father meets his doom at her hands, as does his city and people; Minos

³ By which point he has had various adventures and troubles, not least family problems concerning his wife and the Minotaur.

⁴ Galinsky (1975) too lists this story as a particular example of one which is self-contained within the *Metamorphoses* (p.18).

achieves his purpose of overrunning the city through Scylla; and Scylla meets her own fate as an outcast as a direct consequence of her behaviour.

This much is self-evident. However, identifying with whom she is primarily in conflict, and over what issue, is more complex.

Scylla comes into conflict with her father Nisus, her city, country and its citizens because to her they are potential obstacles to her desires (8.69-72). However, although the most notable action is Scylla's betrayal of her father and thus city and country in an attempt to reach Minos, this is not the main conflict. Nor is the main conflict Scylla versus the established norms, values, rules and duties of her culture and society (of which Nisus, being the king of the city, is its most explicit embodiment). All these conflicts are significant and related to the main one, but neither the opposition of Nisus, nor of Scylla's countrymen, directly decides the story's outcome. It is in fact Minos with whom Scylla is primarily in conflict. It is Minos who ultimately has the decision to oppose her values and actions, and is presented at the climax as the character whose decision – in regard to Scylla's – determines the ultimate outcome of the story.

The other conflicts – both those between Minos and Nisus, and those implied between Scylla and her city, country and father – are nevertheless still important. It is Scylla's manner of resolving these (cutting off her father's lock and handing the city over to Minos), that causes her conflict with Minos and results in both his rejection of her and the city's fall. The cause for Scylla's behaviour is her passion for Minos. His love is the object sought by Scylla and the value at stake on account of which she commits her actions. It is this that constitutes the issue over which they come into conflict

Thus the main conflict can be stated as: Scylla v. Minos, over the issue of Scylla's desire for their mutual love.

3. Plot-development

Backstory and establishment of the situation

Excluding the death of Minos' son, mentioned in Book 7, on account of which Minos is waging his war,⁵ we are given all the essentials of the backstory within the first eight lines of Book 8. A city, ruled by honoured Nisus, whose safety is tied to the lock of purple hair on his head, is and has been besieged for several months by an enemy force, the leader of whom is Minos. After this introduction, the focus shifts for some time to Scylla: her relationship with Nisus and lack thereof with Minos is shown; her character is established; and the depth of her motivations is presented (8.17ff). However, up until this point, the feelings she is said by the narrator to have – and which she herself admits – although expressive of strong emotions, have not been seen in action, and therefore cannot yet be accepted as truly authentic. It is only when we see her act on these feelings that this can be done and, in this story, this means waiting until her nocturnal mutilation of Nisus – part of the rise to the climax. This is the point at which Scylla's part in the establishment is complete.

Note that before this point we are given little information about Minos. Aside from his physical appearance only hints are found in Book 7 that he has a tendency for justice. Thus the establishment of the main conflict is only truly complete when we find out his true nature at the height of the climax – his rejection of Scylla.

Build-up

In this story (as with that of *Ceres*), there is significant overlap between the establishment and the build-up. The rise to the climax constitutes the time from when Scylla has become familiar with the enemy's name and resolved to kill her father, until her confrontation with Minos, the climax.⁶ That this is the climax, and not the mutilation of her father – the character

⁵ This is dealt with in Book 7.456-8, where the narrator states that Minos is seeking to avenge his son with just arms "*iustis... armis*," and slightly later (7.482-3) Minos himself says he is conducting a pious war "*piaequae... militia*." The cause is only mentioned once in the main body of this story (8.58). However, as we will see, this is merely the inciting incident of the *Scylla* story's inciting incident. See Hollis (1970) on 8.1-5, and Anderson (1972) on 7.458 for more on this set-up.

⁶ Whether or not Nisus really does die in Ovid's version is a point of contention. He does in the versions given in Aes. *Choe.* 612-22; Pseudo-Verg. *Ciris*; Apollod. *Lib.* 3.210-1; Hyg. *Fab.* 255; and Paus. 1.19.4, but does not in Hyginus *Fab.* 198, 242. Hollis (1970), commenting on Scylla's words "to the face of my father? Whom I have

with whom she has the most explicit and obvious conflict – can be seen from the fact that her meeting with Minos is the point at which the final decisions of the main characters are made and we can tell in essence what will ultimately happen. Furthermore, up until this point, we are not given enough evidence to be able to be sure what Minos' character and therefore reaction is likely to be; we have not seen his famed justice or piety in action and, for all we know, there is every chance that Minos, as the city's enemy, will welcome her deed since it coincides with his goals.

Resolution

Scylla, giving over her city to the enemy, expresses pride at her actions, but Minos rejects her in moral disgust. The city is nevertheless plundered, and we see the demise of Scylla. This comes partly through her father, as retribution for her crimes, but mostly through Minos, whose feelings, values and moral stance she failed to take into account – merely assuming them to be in accord with her own.

Finally, a note on a conflict not yet mentioned; Scylla's inner conflict, which we see in her first speech (8.44-80). She is torn between what she knows is right, proper, accepted, and what her emotions dictate – something that points in the exact opposite direction to her rational thoughts. This conflict is essentially between love and duty, selfishness and selflessness, as is that which we see between Scylla and Minos. One is essentially the physical reflection of the other, but on a broader scale.

given up to you" "*patris ad ora?/ quem tibi donavi.*" (8.115-6), states that "Nisus is now dead, as Scylla herself has told Minos (94) ... her suggestion is purely rhetorical, as is the address to Nisus in 125-6." However, if Minos is indeed to be taken as dead, then I would suggest that it is also possible to take it that in her madness, Scylla has cut off Nisus' head and presented it to Minos (compare Ovid's words in *I.* 361-2). This would make her direct references to Nisus in the above quotation, and in her statement "Inflict punishments, father Nisus." "*exige poenas,/ Nise pater.*" (8.125-6) either rhetorical, as Hollis suggests, or an implication that she does not know or comprehend the reality of what she has done. Having said that, I am far from convinced that Nisus is in reality to be supposed dead at any point during Ovid's tale. These final statements by Scylla rather suggest to me that her father is alive. Both the fact that the word "*caput*" in line 94 is often used as a metaphor for *life/ security/most important part* (see 1.763, 12.613, 15.435 and 15.736 for comparable examples), and the fact that transformations after death are rare in the *Metamorphoses* (the exceptions are that of *Ceyx* at 11.736ff, and possibly *Caeneus* at 12.189-209), both support such a reading. Moreover, if he were supposed to be dead, it would seem to necessitate some sort of further explanation as to how and why he ends up as an unquestionably living bird flying the skies, like that found in the Pseudo-Vergilian *Ciris* (520-8) – that Nisus was resurrected out of pity by the gods on account of his piety and the unjust circumstances of his death. This would take the focus of the story off Scylla, somewhat anti-thematically.

4. Characterisation

As observed earlier, Scylla is the protagonist of this story and it is therefore hardly surprising that her character stands out as by far the most developed. When she is first introduced, she is depicted in girlish innocence, making music from the walls in apparent youthful happiness.⁷ This picture of apparent contentment and enjoyment of life is starkly contrasted with the hard-hearted action of betraying her city and father that Scylla later commits. Although her motivations are obvious – being stated by her explicitly in her two speeches (8.44-88 and 108-42) and proved in action – they are not so easy to understand.

The way Scylla is described by the narrator in the lines following the introduction, is as one not in her right senses. This is made most explicit in the description of Scylla, when admiring Minos out on the plane, as “hardly her own, hardly in possession of a sane mind was the virgin daughter of Nisus” “*vix sua, vix sanae virgo Niseia compos/ mentis erat*” (8.35-6). The narrator then goes on to give illustrating examples, using the language of elegy, suggesting that Scylla is subject to and acting according to emotions beyond her control.⁸ The truth of these statements is played out in action throughout the story. For example, it is clear from Scylla’s first speech that she is influenced by her emotions. Statements such as “for who, unless unknowingly, would be so harsh that would dare to throw a hostile spear against you?” “*quis enim tam durus ut in te/ derigere inमितem non inscius audeat hastam?*” (8.65-6)⁹ show that her thinking is irrational and takes no account of context. Indeed, nearly every statement made by Scylla in this speech is based on assumption; the most important of which being that Minos would receive her kindly and reciprocate her love.¹⁰ This is something for which she has no evidence except her own unsubstantiated emotions and has no way of accurately

⁷ Scylla’s innocence and youth is further suggested by the repeated description of her as a “*virgo*” (8.29, 8.35), and also “*virgineos*” (8.39).

⁸ The language used is of typical of elegy (consider the following words and phrases “*felix iaculum*” “*tangeret ille*” “*manu premerat*” “*felicia ... vocabat*” “*mittere corpus*” “*vel siquid Minos aliud velit*” 8.36-42) and her wishes and actions are stock examples of irrational behaviour. Taken together, these do much to emphasise by elegiac allusion the strong influence of blind emotion that has come upon Scylla.

⁹ She is also later “*furibunda*” (8.107), a word which, when found in the *Met.*, universally means “out of one’s wits” (*O.L.D.*), except perhaps in 10.410, where it has more the tone of “frenzy”.

¹⁰ This is emphasised in her use of the phrase “our love” “*noster amor*” (8.62), notably in the plural, which I take not to be a nosism, but a term reflecting Scylla’s assumption of her and Minos’ mutual love. In support of this reading Anderson (1972) notes on 8.61-2 that “*noster*” (near the beginning of line 62) is contrasted with the “*suus*” of the preceding line (also near the beginning). In addition, although Scylla often uses the word in other places (8.110, 112, 126, 129) where its most obvious meaning is singular, relating to herself alone, it must be said that every time she uses it (the references being in the context of “our crime” or “our victory”) it could be taken as referring not only to Scylla but also to Minos, since he did profit by Scylla’s deed. The one other occurrence of this word in this story is in Minos’ reply speech to Scylla (8.97), where he uses it in the plural context of himself and her/anyone who is listening.

predicting.¹¹ Examples of Scylla's irrational and emotion based choices and actions are present throughout the story.¹²

However, despite all of this, both Scylla's initial mental debate and her later speech show that although she is clearly acting on her emotions, she is at no point doing so instinctively. Her passion is not blind. We see this in the specifics of what she admired, as well as her decision that by action, she can reach and thereby win Minos. Although she is at the mercy of emotions outside her control, we see through her internal reasoning that she still has a choice of how or whether to act upon them.¹³ There is thought, choice, and weighing of values going on in this passage. Scylla knows what she is doing and is aware of, and seriously considers, both the morality and potential consequences of her choices and actions. Her speech to Minos after being rejected by him shows the same kind of expressions of choice and consciously pursued values.

The link between these issues can be found in the depiction of emotions as primaries, over which one has no control, and which are the source of one's valued judgements.¹⁴ This means that Scylla's attempt to use reason is nevertheless influenced by her emotions (such as her passionate love for Minos) and is in reality mere deductive rationalising starting from these as a base.¹⁵ This ultimately results in her acting selfishly, irrationally and in opposition to what she knows to be intrinsically moral, by betraying her father, city and people.

¹¹ This is emphasised by the narrator's use here of the word "*fiducia*" (usually translated as *confidence*, *trust*, *security*) in the context of the trust Scylla puts in receiving a positive welcome from Minos for her deed (8.86-9). "*fiducia*" is also used in line 10 and both references are to people putting faith into something which they ultimately should not, since it does not work out for them. Ovid almost unanimously uses this word in an ironic fashion in the *Met.*, mostly where confidence is shown or said to be - or implied that it should be - misplaced. See the uses and their contexts at 2.731, 3.270, 4.687, 5.309, 7.309, 8.434, 9.120, 11.430, 12.625, and 14.32. See also Hollis (1970); Anderson (1972); and Bömer (1969-86) on 8.10.

¹² The final proof we are given that her irrational actions stem from emotion is when, having received an unquestionably negative answer by Minos, she states her intentions "I will follow you, unwitting one, and, having embraced the curved stern, will be dragged through the lengthy straits" "*insequar invitum puppimque\ amplexa recurvam/ per freta longa trahar*" (8.141-2). Moreover, as Glenn (1986) astutely notes, in this final speech, Scylla "also reveals that she had suppressed her knowledge that Minos' wife was guilty of infidelity with a beast, for she brings it out now to shame and wound Minos. This merely means that she knew the fact before, and it was equally to Minos' discredit when Scylla loved him so distractedly. She also denigrates Minos' paternity and his character. There is more nastiness to Scylla: she knew all along that there was a wife that she would have to supplant" (p.103).

¹³ For example, we see her process of convincing herself that since Minos is in the right in attacking her city, and that since it will be conquered anyway, she will be saving both her people and Minos from harm by giving up her country to gain her loved one and prove her affection by the deed.

¹⁴ Discussed in *Phaethon 6. Overall Philosophical Outlook*.

¹⁵ As Crump (1931) notes, "Ovid has no analysis of Scylla's passion; he dwells on the results of it, and shows the process by which she justifies her crime, and the violence of her feelings when the crime is proved fruitless"

Scylla is the first example we have discussed of a character that unquestionably has a mixed approach to morality.¹⁶ Characters with this approach – like the intrinsicists and unlike the subjectivists – appear to be aware of and hold morality as important, and act as if their lives should be guided by a specific code of abstract principles, and that there are therefore certain morals requiring to be held, values to be pursued, and actions to be undertaken. However, these characters differ from those who hold the intrinsic approach in that they do not hold that such a moral code is intrinsic or stems from authority. Rather – like the subjectivists – they determine what this code is independently, without reference to the gods, Fates, their superiors, society, tradition, or supposedly intrinsic morals or duties. Similarly, the morals and values of these characters, being decided upon and validated independently, do not necessarily have to be upheld regardless of consequences or context (although a character might choose to do so).

Because the morals and values linked to this approach are decided upon by standards other than intrinsic, as is the morality of the course of action by which these morals and values are pursued, it is no surprise that such characters are usually found pursuing primarily personal, self-centred values and have a personal base for their morality. Both the morals and values of these characters are consequently often very much in accordance with their emotions and in opposition to the altruistic duties and values associated with the intrinsic approach. For example: personal passion, impiety and unyielding mental resolve are often among *mixed* characters' most noticeable qualities. They are in this way similar to characters who approach morality subjectively.

This is perfectly logically given the mind-body dichotomy presented as inherent in the metaphysical make-up of the *Metamorphoses*' characters. Because one's emotions are presented as primaries and therefore influence one's value-judgements, this inherent dichotomy means that the choices and actions of characters who judge morality independently are highly likely to be influenced by, and based on, their emotions. This is why self-interest and personal values – judgement of something as of personal importance – because it is equated with emotion, is treated as by nature non-objective and an inherently distortive factor in appraising a situation.

(p.239). This also accounts for the observation made by Hollis (1970), on 8.44-80, that "the poet makes little attempt at realistic psychology," and further statement that "There is no real personal conflict here. The girl's only struggle is to fit argument to her already existing desire."

¹⁶ Outlined already in *Ceres 6. Overall Philosophical Outlook*.

That Scylla can be categorised as a character that holds a mixed approach is most obvious in her speeches, which contrast her own morals and values and those accepted as intrinsic.¹⁷ She acts according to her emotions, *but* she does this consciously, rather than impulsively. We can see this in Scylla's open admission that she knows what is motivating her: "love encouraged the wicked deed" "*suasit amor facinus*" (8.90); something we never see from consistent emotionalists. Scylla is clearly aware of the issue of morality and chooses her course of action with full knowledge of what is intrinsic (implicit in her first speech and the narrator's lead-up to it, and explicit in her last).¹⁸ Similarly, in her speech of rebuke to Minos after he has rejected her, she states several times that she knows that her actions were a crime, and yet does not regret them. She knows that she has followed her emotions, rather than her reason, and that what she has done is immoral.¹⁹

¹⁷ That Scylla's independent choices are the opposite of what she knows to be intrinsic is not only explicitly stated by her, but cleverly highlighted in numerous instances by juxtaposition of words with opposite meanings, and by clever wordplay based around different characters' and the narrator's use of the same words to express different views of an issue. For example, Scylla's statement "may this, crime to both fatherland and father, be a (pious) duty to you" "*scelus hoc patriaeque patrique est, / officium tibi sit.*" (8.130-1), shows how inverted her values are. She claims that she is doing a duty "*officium*" not to her family or country as one would expect, but to an entirely selfish value. The placement of "*officium*" immediately after what we would expect it to go with (father and country) emphasises the contrast between what should be – in terms of morals and values expected by others, which are presented as intrinsic by Scylla and elide with the intrinsic duties and values portrayed throughout the text – and what she has come to believe to be moral through her own independent judgement. Further examples of similar differentiation, juxtaposition and wordplay can be found throughout this story.

¹⁸ It should be noted that although she shows knowledge of what is across the board presented as intrinsic, how she knows this – what is to her the source of such intrinsic mandates – is not stated. Since in this story there is little mention of authorities representing higher powers, such knowledge is probably meant to be innate or self-evident.

¹⁹ Apart from the other characters whose mixed approaches to morality are expressed in the same way as Scylla's (through contrasting morals and values debated over extensively in their monologues, they know what is intrinsically moral, yet ignore it), such as the title characters in the stories of *Medea* (7.1-158), *Byblis* (9.454-665) and *Myrrha* (10.298-502), prominent examples of characters who clearly fall into the *mixed* category, and whose actions, morals and values are mostly indicative of this approach include: *Phoebus* (as depicted in the story of *Phoebus & Daphne* – 1.452-567), who knows he is acting on emotion (1.507), but nevertheless persists in his pursuit; *Narcissus* (3.339-510), since he comprehends the impossibility and irrationality of his passion and still follows it – show that he is not just an emotionalist; *Pentheus* (3.511-87, 692-733), who thinks about what he is doing and follows a certain moral code – seen in his first speech, 3.531-64 – but *not* an intrinsic one; *The Lydian Sailors* (3.588-691), since they consciously and deliberately spurn a godhead out of disbelief in his presence and power; *Arachne* (6.1-145), who consciously sets herself against a goddess, and with reason, not just emotion; *Niobe*, whose situation (6.146-312) is almost identical, she is similarly proud and hubristic in her self-evaluation, which is not purely based on emotion, since it has a basis in reality; *The Lycian Peasants* (6.313-81), who are not only rude to Latona, but unaccountably mean; *Procne* too (6.412-674), who, when planning her revenge mentions the topic of morality, says she will dare any crime (6.613), thus showing consciousness of her actions and showing that they are not intrinsically moral ones; *Erysichthon* (8.725-884), since he consciously and deliberately ignores the statements of superior powers; *Orpheus* (10.1-85), seen by the principles – stated and implied – upon which he acts; *Ajax* (13.1-381), who uses logic and reason, argues each point in his debate with Ulysses rationally, but who gets nowhere from it. His death scene, in which he states his choice to die and why, shows that he consciously determines and understands his fate and thus

Nisus' character, before his transformation into a bird, is only presented through the speech of the narrator, who tells us that he is a king and honoured.²⁰ If we take it that Nisus' actions as a bird are reflective, to some extent at least, of his character as a man (which would be legitimate if he had, like most of Ovid's characters, been transformed from human to animal only in body but had retained their character), then we could add that he is either a valuer of justice, and/or a believer in revenge – although the context of the action does not suggest one interpretation over the other. This characterisation is noticeably skeletal. However, an explanation for this can be elicited from the fact that Nisus' character does not matter with respect to what actions Scylla would take. As long as Scylla considered him a potential obstacle to her desires, his depiction as a benevolent king, a model father and an overall nice person, or equally easily a tyrannical, dictatorial bully to all who came under his influence, would to her be irrelevant.²¹ Nor would it help us to evaluate Scylla and her actions, because killing a member of one's family is throughout the *Metamorphoses* presented as intrinsically immoral. Another reason for his character being so lightly sketched is that a fuller characterisation would, as we will see in 5. *Theme*, make the meaning of the conflict with him more on a personal level than is consistent with the rest of this story.

We can say only a little more about Minos, whose *character* is inconsequential to Scylla's decisions, but becomes important in the climax and resolution. The most significant aspect of his character is his penchant for law, justice and morality. This is implied by the narrator's description of Minos as just "*iudice*" at 24,²² and later statement that he is a most just lawgiver (8.101), and by Scylla's statement that the war he is waging on account of his dead son is a just one "*iusta*" (8.58). These statements are consistent with the narrator's introduction to Minos in Book 7, where it is said that he was seeking to avenge his son with just arms "*iustis... armis*," (7.456-8) and his own words soon afterwards that he was

holds a mixed approach, not one who acts purely on emotion (see 13.387-90). Statements like "if there are any gods" (13.49) show that he is not an intrinsicist; and finally *Polyphemus* (13.740ff), who is a perfect example of a mixed character – he is rational, knows himself and explains why he should be valued, as well as why he is equal to the gods in many respects.

²⁰ It is said by the narrator that his purple lock was amidst his honoured "*honoratos*" white hair (8.9). Each time a part of the verb "*honoro*" is used elsewhere in the *Metamorphoses*, it refers to actual actions of the characters within their respective stories (see 2.515, 8.266, 14.84, 15.617), rather than the narrator's evaluation of how the character is or should be thought of.

²¹ See Glenn (1986), p.101.

²² A reference almost certainly meant to remind the reader of Minos as judge and thus foreshadow what is to come. Noted in Hill (1992), on 8.24, and alluded to obliquely at 9.434ff. See Hollis (1970) on 8.101-2.

conducting the war with pious arms “*piaeque/... militiae*”(7.482-3).²³ That these statements are a fair and reasonable reflection of Minos’ character is not confirmed in action until the climax. There, we see that his care for justice and/or morality causes him to reject Scylla’s report of her deeds (8.95-100) as a treacherous crime, even though he is the one besieging the city and has had it given to him without any inconvenience to himself.

That Minos proceeds to sack the city shows his scale of values in this situation. Having wilfully chosen to make a serious attack, it would be odd if he were to desist merely for the sake of someone else’s corrupt morals. Similarly, with regard to Minos’ association with justice, it is noteworthy that he does not punish Scylla for her actions (as is the case in other versions of the story), but washes his hands of her completely.²⁴ Perhaps he, as a just lawgiver, even though disagreeing with the action, could not morally punish someone over whom he had no jurisdiction, who had committed no crime against him or his people, and had actually been a benefit to them.

Evaluation of characters

In Scylla’s case, nothing positive is said by the narrator or the internal characters. She is in fact openly criticised by all parties.²⁵ Moreover, the selfish values she pursues (which are

²³ This tale is also referred to in the Pseudo-Vergilian *Ciris* (110-4); Apollod. *Lib.* 3.17-20; Hyg. *Fab.* 49, *Astron.* 2.14; and Servius’ *ad Verg. Ec.* 6.74. Note also, as Hill (1992) observes on 7.483, that the stress here is on duty to family.

²⁴ Parthenius (frag. 20 from *Schol. ad Dionysius Periegetes*, 420) says Minos tied her to the rudder of his ship and dragged her behind him because he considered her a proved traitor and therefore likely to betray him. This situation is also found in the Pseudo-Vergilian *Ciris*; Prop. 3.19.21-8, Apollod. *Lib.* 3.210-1; and Serv. *ad Verg. Ec.* 6.74. In all of these versions, either no clear reason is given why Minos does this, or he does it as a punishment for her deeds which. In Ovid’s version, Minos’ character, being presented as the epitome of justice and fairness, would be opened up to the charges of callousness and hypocrisy by excessively punishing one who has both benefitted him and necessarily made herself an outcast by her deed. Pausanias (2.34.7) says that he ordered his sailors to throw her from his ship, and Strabo (8.6) just says she was drowned by him. Likewise, Prop. 3.19.21-8; Serv. *ad Verg. Ec.* 6.74; and *Schol. ad Eurip. Hippol.* 1200, describe Minos as either leaving Scylla behind or tying her to, or having her thrown off, his ship out of fear or betrayal on his own side after an initial agreement with Scylla.

²⁵ The narrating voice states from the start that her affection for Minos was improper (8.23-4) and further emphasises the fact that she is doing what she should not, in saying “the motivation is present in her, if only it were *permitted*, to bear her virgin footsteps through the enemy lines” “*impetus est illi, liceat modo, ferre per agmen/ virgineos hostile gradus*” (8.38-9) – something she not only proceeds to do, but commits a wicked crime “*facinus*” (8.85) in the process. The narrator’s description of Minos as a *just* lawgiver further implies that Scylla’s crime deserved her fate. Likewise, as Hill (1992) on 8.85 notes, the view of this crime as wicked is emphasised by the narrator by juxtaposing “*nata*” and “*parentem*” in line 85. Scylla’s words “but believe that I hand over to you the head of my father” “*tradere.../ sed patrum tibi crede caput*” (8.93-4) being followed by

depicted as the opposite of those generally presented as intrinsically moral), and the kind of passion that goes with them are likewise portrayed negatively (by contrast, through negative evaluatory statements made by the narrator and internal characters, and through the destruction and misery they bring) both in this story and throughout the *Metamorphoses*. Scylla herself shows awareness of this in her own comparison of what she is doing and what is intrinsically right.²⁶ A final point towards Scylla's negative evaluation is the fact that the one who foils her desires is virtuous. Had Minos betrayed and deserted her as in the other versions of the myth (alluded to here in the depiction of Scylla clinging to his boat as he sails off),²⁷ this would not be illustrated as clearly.

As a whole, Scylla's character and actions are presented as contradicting the explicit philosophical framework of the story and she is shown to deserve her ruin thereby. However, as we will observe later, this is not necessarily cause and effect.

Nonetheless, although there is no sympathy elicited for Scylla's predicament or demise,²⁸ she is not presented as a truly evil character, but more in the vein of one who has had the misfortune to be overcome by unchosen emotions.²⁹ Her essentially good nature is shown in her knowledge of what is normally accepted as right (in her initial debate with herself) and by the touch of characterisation mentioned above that first shows her in a positive light as a happy youth, making music from the walls. While her character's choices and actions are not in line with the philosophical views explicitly promoted by the narrator throughout the poem, her love for Minos is not presented as totally wicked and blameworthy. This is consistent with the fact that it stems from something out of her control, and explains why there is no suggestion that the reader should feel satisfaction at the ending.³⁰ Her love is only presented

the narrator's evaluation "and in her wicked right hand she held out her gifts" "*scelerataque dextra/ munera porrexit*" (8.94-5) show the narrator's view and further suggest to the reader not only a spiritual stain on Scylla by her crime, but also a real physical one, coming from the blood of Nisus (see n.6 above). Similar sentiments regarding Scylla and her actions are found in Minos and Nisus' reactions of her deeds.

²⁶ Among other things, she herself calls her actions a betrayal "*proditione*" (8.56, 115), wicked "*scelus*" (8.111), and a crime "*crimine*" (8.129). More explicitly, she goes on to say that "deservedly the citizens hate [me]" "*cives odere merentem*" (8.116) and, speaking as if to her father, "I admit, I have earned it and am worthy of death" "*fateor, merui et sum digna perire*" (8.127).

²⁷ See Hollis 1970, on 128-30

²⁸ Or at least, as Otis (1970) puts it, "sympathy is minimal" (p.276). Glenn (1986), is of the opinion that "There is not much to be said for a silly little criminal whose claims on the readers' sympathies are solitariness, romantic delusions, and an inability to see any viewpoint save her own" (p.103).

²⁹ I do not agree with Otis (1970), who states that Scylla "is too obviously wicked to excite much emotional response" (p.353).

³⁰ See Cicero *De Off.* 1.8.27 (end), where he says that a crime committed on impulse or passion is far less grievous than one committed on premeditation.

negatively here because of the context – its opposition to intrinsic morals and values. However, sympathy is not elicited and, overall, there is a detached quality to Scylla's presentation.³¹

There is also detachment in Nisus' presentation. There is no great pitying done at his fate, even given the extent of the treachery and crime that was committed against him, nor is there enough information given to allow any kind of objective judgement on whether he should be considered a significant loss to anyone. All that we can say for certain is that since he is a king, responsible for the welfare of his people (especially in this wartime situation), and is neither represented negatively or shown to do anything to deserve his fate, and is betrayed by a daughter who would normally be expected to be dutiful and loving towards him, a sympathetic portrayal of his tragic fate would be expected. It is not given.

The character of Minos is only ever criticised by Scylla, and is always said by the narrator, and backed up in deed, to be just and moral. Minos' fairness is highlighted by comparison to other treatments of the myth. He is predominantly portrayed elsewhere as a hostile nobody who, after taking the city with Scylla's help, drowns her either out of fear that she will betray him or because he has achieved his aim and no longer cares. Here, the fact that he was attacking the city before receiving Scylla's aid dispels the negative implications of his taking advantage of Scylla's crime.³² Had he decided out of the blue to plunder a city which had been given into his hands when a crime of which he took no part had been committed, the situation would have been totally different. This too is significantly different to previous versions, which predominantly give Minos as the instigator of Scylla's actions – or at least attribute to him sanction of them.³³ Both cases would make the motives attributed to him in Ovid's version for rejecting Scylla hypocritical to say the least.³⁴

³¹ Hollis (1970), on 8.145-6, express puzzlement, stating "we are left in doubt whether she is punished, pitied, or even honoured."

³² See Glenn (1986), p.103 for a contrary opinion.

³³ In Aes. *Choe.* 616-8, Scylla committed her crime for the gift of a necklace from Minos. In Prop. 3.19.21-2. (also compare to Prop.4.4 – see Tissol, 1997, pp.147ff) and the Pseudo-Vergilian *Ciris* 185-8, she did it in exchange for his dower. Hyg. *Fab.* 198, although not specifying why Scylla did it, says that Minos had (previous to the deed) promised to take her to Crete – which is similar in principle to the above authors. Any of these options, if given in Ovid's story, would both reflect badly on Minos, and mean that there would have to be significantly different reasons for the fates that are given to occur for these characters. This would consequently affect the themes explicit in the story's results.

³⁴ In contrast to the other two main characters, Minos is one to whom, as Anderson (1972) on 8.101-3 observes, sympathy is retained.

5. Theme

Combining the elements discussed above, the statement of the plot-theme of *Scylla* is as follows: *the youthful daughter of a king in a besieged city, besotted with the enemy leader, a just and moral man, attempts to win his love by betraying her father and city.* The driving conflict is between Scylla and Minos, and the story plays out as it does on account of Scylla's choice to disregard intrinsic morals and values in favour of her own, the extent of her passion, and Minos' strictly moral character.³⁵ We see Scylla's own view of morality active in her monologue and speech to Minos. We also see this, combined with the extent of her passion, in the murder of her father and betrayal of her city. Minos' moral character is shown in his complete rejection of Scylla, even though she has done what she has for his sake and been the instrument of bringing about his desired victory in war. The results are the demise of Scylla's city, misery and transformation for Scylla, and the resumption of normal life (or at least normal warfare) for Minos.

The negative results for Scylla, her family, city, and people are all perfectly logical results of her approach to morality. Indeed it is a key aspect of the mixed approach to morality – the independent judgement of duties and values – that allows her to make decisions with an emotional root, and thus pursue self-interested values regardless of their relevance to reality. As Tissol (1997) sums up, Scylla is “...wholly self-preoccupied and blind to the realities of [her] situation” (p.149).³⁶ Scylla's value-judgements have an emotional base, and her process of determining what is moral is in fact deductive rationalising from such a base. The actions engendered by these value-judgements bring her into conflict with the morals, duties, values and actions depicted as intrinsically mandated and, in turn, draw on the negative fates that befall her, her father, their city, and its people. Although Scylla achieves her initial objective of reaching Minos, she is rejected by him as a result of what she did to get to him – actions which stemmed from her independent approach to morality. Her emotion took over her reason and prevented her from taking Minos' motivations and moral stance into account when deciding whether or not she would be likely to succeed in her endeavours. In Scylla's case we see an extreme example of where a mixed approach can lead; the worst possible result of independent thought and choice.

³⁵ Thus the story's main conflict is in reality a philosophical one, and more specifically moral, since it is a conflict between two opposing codes of values, and the approaches to morality from which they stem.

³⁶ A sentiment also expressed by Glenn (1986), p.101, and Anderson (1972) on 8.51-2, who slightly more bluntly describes Scylla as in a “dreamworld.”

This brings up several thematic points, including that of independence being linked with emotion, and both independence and emotion being linked with self-interest.³⁷ As a corollary to these, and stemming from the results of the story, we have the presentation of how the mixed approach to morality (the product of independent judgement) is likely to lead to destruction – both for oneself and others – because such an approach is synonymous with emotion and selfishness, and is therefore likely to bring one into conflict with others, with what is intrinsic, or with reality itself.³⁸ If this combination of themes were to be summed up in a single statement, it would be that *selfish passion leads to destruction*. As a further corollary, we have the presentation of independently chosen, morals, values and actions (associated with selfishness, irrationality and emotion) as being the opposite of those presented as intrinsic (associated with duty and selflessness).

One further thematic point found in this tale, which we have already seen several times, is that of excess value bringing destruction. This applies both to the character doing the valuing, and to others. It is because Scylla was so passionate about Minos and being with him that she went to the extent that she did to gain her ends. If these emotions had not been so strong, she could and would never have gone as far as she did, and the results depicted would not have come to pass.

³⁷ Almost identical themes are explicitly present in all of the characters who have lengthy monologues. *Byblis* is a perfect example. We know that she has a mixed approach to morality, since she, like Scylla, thinks about her actions and expresses her knowledge of what is taken throughout the poem as intrinsically moral, although she consciously chooses to act otherwise. However, emotion has distorted her views of reality and morality to such an extent that she basically states the subjectivist creed (anything goes if one feels like it), and justifies it by the very fact that she has emotion, which, she says, the old do not, and therefore laws and morals are for the old, not for the young to whom passion is present (9.553-5). This implicitly links the subjective with emotion and a fixed code of morality with its absence. The same things are also implicit in the words and actions of the other characters who have a mixed approach to morality. For example, Phoebus (in *Phoebus & Daphne*) says “Love is for me the cause for pursuing” “*Amor est mihi causa sequendi*” (1.507), which succinctly expresses the fact that he is conscious of his emotions which are beyond his understanding or control, yet chooses to follow them. Such a statement is far too profound for a consistent emotionalist. Characters such as these are not in fact subjectivists. Although they act on their emotions, they choose to do so, and are aware of alternatives, and are thus perfect examples of why characters with an independent approach to morality are depicted as equally far from the intrinsic as the subjectivists. In the case of other “mixed” characters that are not consciously following their emotions, the same themes still apply.

³⁸ As other examples of independence bringing destruction in this way, we may list: the harsh pride “*dura superbia*” (3.354) of *Narcissus*, which causes his selfishness and disregard of others and incites retribution upon himself; *Pentheus*’ choice to follow certain moral code (shown in his first speech, 3.531-64) – but not an intrinsic one. This causes him to spurn and ridicule things associated with the divine and induces divine anger through these actions; and *Arachne*, who is both independent and proud. She states that she can look after herself, shows no fear of the goddess, and is both stupidly confident in her contest and eager for victory (6.50). She is said to hurry to her fate “*fata*” (6.51) in behaving thus.

6. Overall Philosophical Outlook

Again in this story the idea of determinism is present, although far more implicitly than explicitly. There is almost no mention of outside determining agencies directing what happens.³⁹ This is consistent with the story being focused around the presentation of character, and the consequences of actions with certain motivations, rather than the presentation of a system of metaphysics, as was more the case in *Ceres*. This is also a particularly human story, and therefore one would expect the fates of the characters to result from *their* actions. However, this is only partly the case – it applies to Scylla, but only within certain limits – and the idea of determinism is nevertheless present implicitly in several ways.

For example, although Scylla's explicit self-doubt and conscious decisions-making shows that she has what is effectively free-will (choice over what to say and what actions to take) – an automaton could not have such a passionate speech expressing values and true independence of thought – she still has emotions which do not stem from her character or her conscious decisions. They are in fact presented as innate primaries, outside her understanding and control. Thus her free-will and capacity for directing his life by independent choice is, in a sense, curtailed, because her choices, values and actions are influenced by irrational emotions, which therefore ultimately take her fate out of her hands. Because of this, Scylla's two monologues do not provide evidence of a deep inner psychology and introspection that would provide evidence against a determinist outlook.

What we effectively see here is the idea of reason and emotion as opposites, and the presence of a dichotomy between mind and body. This is highlighted in the character of Scylla, who knows that there is a great difference between how she is expected to behave and how she wants to behave, and who ends up attempting to combine both sides of the dichotomy. However, all she ends up doing is using reason to rationalise deductively – starting from the

³⁹ Excluding the references to individual gods by name (at 8.15, 20, 31, 61, 99, 152 – none of which present these gods as major players in the actions), there are only four references to the gods through forms of the word "*deus*." The first three, at 8.50, 72 and 73, all come in Scylla's speech, and certainly do not show them as determining forces in her eyes – the latter two amount to the opposite. There is no contradiction between this and her first response to rejection by Minos – occupying herself with prayers (8.106). Given the context, it is clear that these are prayers *to Minos*, which turn into "*volentem ... iram*." The prayers are mere entreaties, which turn into rebukes. The fourth time the gods are mentioned directly is at 8.97, in which they are invoked by Minos, who shows that he at least believes in their efficacy. That what he believes is true is backed up in action. His wishes are fulfilled exactly as he expressed them. Although this is unquestionably an instance of an external determining agency, it is only relevant to the manner of the story's resolution, and not the main conflict, so I will say no more about it here. The Fates' power is never alluded to in this story.

justification and morality of her emotions as a given – and convincing herself why she should follow her emotions.⁴⁰ Her emotions subvert her reason when trying to amalgamate the two. The struggle between these two states is dramatized in the dialogue-type scene of Scylla's first soliloquy. She consciously follows where her emotions lead – in a direction which has no rational relationship to reality. Even though Scylla is not a consistent emotionalist, she is still overcome by passion, the origins of which are not explained explicitly in this story, although it is implied that they come from within, and not from external forces. Her downfall comes from not being able to resist it, even though it is contrary to her nature and conscious judgement. The conflict between reason and emotion is played out in a larger scale in the form of Minos v. Scylla.

The idea of determinism is also implicit in the depiction of Scylla as misguided in believing that her choices and actions are what determines her fate and that the setting of and achieving of a purpose will demonstrate it. In her first speech, Scylla states explicitly that she thinks she is in charge of her own destiny, “each is to himself his own god” “*sibi quisque profecto/ est deus*” (8.72-3), but the folly of such a view is stressed by her coming to a fate entirely opposite of that which she intended.

It is also important to note that it is not through cunning, will-power or logical reasoning that she succeeds in getting to Minos. If it had been, this could lend support that her choices and actions can be metaphysically efficacious, at least to some extent. On the contrary, almost anything could go wrong at any moment and it is primarily luck that allows her to do the deed without notice and to escape the city and get to the midst of the enemy camp unharmed.

Indeed, chance is a factor in the fates of all three of this story's major characters. Since it features so significantly, this can be taken as a further expression of determinism, because it means that one's character and actions are not likely to have a bearing on the nature of one's fate, or aid one's chances of success or happiness, failure or misery in life. For example, in the case of Nisus, there is nothing in his character or action that influences his outcome. His demise comes about when his lucky lock is severed by the hand of his daughter Scylla, an act brought about not because he opposed Scylla (he never gets the opportunity), but because

⁴⁰ This comes across nowhere better than her words resolving her first monologue (8.72-80). Here we get it all. Scylla puts herself in the right, makes a statement by the gods that she would be rid of her family, states her belief in the sentiments of the old adage “Fortune favours the brave” “*fortes Fortuna adiuvat*” (Ter. *Phorm.* 203. Compare also Hom. *Od.* 7.50-2), and claims in effect that divine sanction comes from within.

Scylla saw him as a hindrance to the desires brought on by her overwhelming passion, something inexplicable and unpredictable. As mentioned earlier, irrespective of whether Nisus had been a model father or a tyrannical bully, the context of the action would have made the situation identical in Scylla's eyes. As long as she could expect a hindrance from him, he would be a threat. Thus his fate is up to chance factors outside his influence. Similarly, that he is transformed later in the story and could attack Scylla in revenge, is again presented as neither a logical nor expected progression of the plot, but a chance occurrence.

Likewise, the deeds and character of Minos are not portrayed as bringing about his success. As far as this story goes, Minos comes out of this situation well. He is victorious and carries his booty back to Crete (8.153-4). However, for all his supposed righteousness and just dealings, and although Scylla thinks he would have conquered anyway (8.60),⁴¹ it is by *chance* that the emotions of another get him his victory (his chief value). His aims in this story are achieved not through his strength of arms, nor his dedication to morality and justice, but comes out of the blue in the form of unexpected, unlikely, and unwanted aid from Scylla. That his character or morality has nothing to do with the achievement of his aims is emphasised by the fact that Scylla specifically does not consider his moral character, and it therefore has nothing to do with her giving over the city to him. Chance is also emphasised in the comparison of his fate to that of Nisus. As was the case with Proserpina and Arethusa in the last story, we do not know that Minos is any better or worse a character than Nisus, yet he survives the story intact and Nisus does not.

Lastly, there is Scylla, who is presented as acting in a subjective, irrational, impious fashion, and as likely to bring herself into ruinous conflicts as a consequence. Nevertheless, the fate she ultimately has, although presented as deserved by her values and actions, is not depicted as necessarily stemming from them. Indeed, her approach to morality is not shown as logically progressing towards failure – although this may at first seem to be the case, since it is this which blinds her to the consideration of Minos' character – but rather, it merely allows such a result to be possible given Scylla's metaphysical weakness of being at the mercy of unchosen emotions. This is emphasised by the fact that confirmation of Minos' character as tied to justice and morality is withheld until after Scylla has acted and committed her major crime, and by the fact that Minos is in essence the most potentially sympathetic foe possible –

⁴¹ The narrator's statement at the beginning of the story that the result was in doubt (8.11-3) is evidence that Scylla's emotions have overridden her reason in evaluating the situation.

one who would be most likely to welcome her because of the seeming similarity of their goals. As it is, there is no way to be sure of a similar fate for this type of character and action, even in a similar situation, since it is pure luck that she meets with one who judges her by the morality of her actions. Additionally, as in Nisus' case, chance plays a part in Scylla's fate. It is not Minos who punishes Scylla for wanting to follow him, rather, she is attacked by her father who comes at her literally out of the blue.

Taken as a whole, the above factors show the nature of the determinism presented as inherent in the world-view of the *Metamorphoses*. Tragedy is not presented as ubiquitous, since there are positive endings in tragic stories, but the natures of the universe and individual characters make the following of an independently chosen moral code and value-set ineffectual in facilitating long-term success or happiness. While the distinction is made between a character who is just and fair, and one who is not, and what happens is shown as being *deserved*, the fates of all three major characters are shown to be effectively haphazard, not hinging upon their merits or lack thereof.

Thus several of the story's explicit themes (those to do with the destruction brought about by selfishness, emotion, and independence) are in fact partially sabotaged, since the poem's deeper philosophical foundations show that these are often only chance occurrences.

As already observed, that which is in this story presented as intrinsically moral, and that which is not, is presented by contrast. The intrinsic (duty to others above oneself, and unconditional love/value of one's father, city, country) is presented as the opposite of what is ultimately chosen by Scylla (selfishness and impiety), who independently decides on what is moral, right, and just.

The presentation of morality by contrast is in fact the most common way of it being presented throughout the course of the *Metamorphoses*. This may take the form of a character with a clearly identifiable approach to morality acting according to a moral principle, pursuing a certain value, or committing a certain kind of action, while showing awareness of an alternative associated with another approach to morality; Scylla is a perfect example of this. Similarly, the contrast might be made between two characters in the same story, that are depicted holding opposite approaches to morality and pursuing opposing morals and values; Minos and Scylla are again an example. Broadly speaking, knowing what kind of morals and values are associated with one approach to morality (and how they are evaluated by narrator

and internal characters, and to what results they lead), helps identify by implication what is associated with the others approaches, and vice versa. The differentiation between characters that hold subjective and mixed approaches to morality – because the morals and values associated with these two approaches often align – can be made simply by observing whether they do what they do instinctively, or by volition.

Morality by contrast is most explicit in the stories of these monologue characters who have a mixed approach to morality, since they are all presented as weighing alternative morals and values – usually what they know is intrinsically mandated and what they “should” do, and what their emotions tell them to do and is the result of their independent judgement.⁴²

Also noteworthy in this story is something we have seen in both *Phaethon* and *Ceres*; an apparent indifference to immorality, morality, virtue and vice. We see this in the tragic fate of Scylla, a character who is presented as acting both immorally and irrationality, and for whom neither sympathy is evoked at her suffering, nor triumph at her seemingly deserved fate; and in the case of Nisus who, although seemingly a good character, comes to an undeserved fate, which is passed over as if an insignificant loss.

This can be explained by considering several ideas already discussed, such as the presentation of a mind-body dichotomy inherent in the individual character’s metaphysical makeup, and that emotions are presented as primaries. The combination of these ideas means that because characters are likely to be overcome by something over which they have no choice or control, their fates are unlikely to reflect truly independent choices, actions, morals and values – *if they stem from them at all*, which the role of chance in the endings of these stories and others implies is far from certain. Thus there is therefore little reason to particularly praise or criticise characters as virtuous or vicious for the results that occur. This is a logical

⁴² Other significant examples of morality-by-contrast include the dramatic/ analytical monologue characters (discussed by Crump 1931, pp.229-42) in the stories of *Medea* (7.1-158), *Byblis* (9.454-665, and *Myrrha* (10.298-502), in whose cases just as many examples can be found of their showing evidence of their being aware of moral alternatives as in Scylla. The case of Althaea (in *Meleager*, 8.260-546) is an exception to what we are talking about here, since her inner conflict is between two duties presented as intrinsically moral. Her case is discussed in the next chapter. Further stories in which the contrast between intrinsic and other moralities are particularly explicit include those of: *The Four Ages* (1.89-150); *Pentheus* (3.511-733); *Narcissus & Echo* (3.339-510); *Ino & Athamas* (4.416-562); *Arachne* (6.1-145); *Niobe* (6.146-312); *The Rejuvenation of Aeson* (7.159-349); *Theseus & Aegeus* (7.404-52); *Daedalus & Icarus* (8.183-235); *Iolaus & Callirhoe’s Sons* (9.394-417); *Orpheus & Eurydice* (10.1-85); *Daedalion* (11.291-345); *Cycnus* (12.64-145); and *Iphis & Anaxarete* (14.698-771).

consequence of such a determinist outlook, and is consistent with the story's overall light-hearted treatment, which does not delve deep into either psychology or sentiment.⁴³

As a whole, the story's contents are not depicted as serious issues over which the reader should become passionate, and indifference is implied (in a philosophical sense) to characters' moral codes as well as their respective fates. To an extent, we may also observe indifference to the fate of Scylla and Ninus' city,⁴⁴ the sack of which and the fates of its citizens are almost entirely omitted from mention in Ovid's story.⁴⁵ This is consistent with the indifference to suffering already discussed in *Phaethon* and *Ceres* with relation to the scenes of mass death and destruction found in each.

There are two further aspects of this story which are both important philosophically and representative of what we find throughout the *Metamorphoses*. The first is to do with Minos' fate beyond the confines of this story. Although Minos is presented within the tale analysed above as thoroughly moral and just, as successful in his endeavours, and as being favoured by the gods, shown through his prayer to the them regarding Scylla being heeded (that she may henceforth not have a place on land or sea), he is referred to once more in the *Metamorphoses* (9.441-6), at which point he is depicted as an old man, clinging onto his kingdom in fear of usurpation. The point of interest here is that while a character may be at one point in the gods' favour, such favour is usually only temporary, and the favoured character usually later comes to suffering, either because of the gods' caprice, or their own faults. We see this scenario throughout the poem, and it ties in with the fact that the gods are presented as both capricious and only heeding prayers by chance, and piety often being contradictory. Thus the gods' favour is not necessarily to be relied upon as long lasting.⁴⁶

⁴³ See Hollis (1970), p.35.

⁴⁴ Although by saying that "most just" Minos imposed "just laws" on them (8.101-2) it is implied that they at least did not suffer excessively, even though Minos was revenging the death of his son.

⁴⁵ Noted by Tissol (1997), p.151, and Anderson (1972), on 101-3. This is consistently the case in similar situations within the *Metamorphose*, often where one would expect at least a little space be given to those injured *en masse* and from no fault of their own. We have already noted this in respect to the destruction caused by Phaethon's wild ride, where Ovid seems more interested in *how* the details are related, rather than *what* is related, and the similar destruction caused by famine that comes on the earth when Ceres forsakes it. In some stories in which mass death occurs (such as those of *Perseus*, 4.604-5.249, and *The Battle of Centaurs & Lapiths*, 12.210-535), the narrator appears not only to be indifferent to suffering, but to revel in the gruesome and bloody details of the event, and does so without any appearance of sympathy or pathos.

⁴⁶ Similar occurrences are found in a number of the *Metamorphoses*' stories. Consider for example the events of: *The Raven & the Crow* (2.531-632); *Atalanta & Hippomenes* (10.560-707); and *Cadmus* (3.1 – 4.603).

The other important aspect to note is the link between what morals, values, actions the narrator evaluates positively, and what is presented throughout the poem as being intrinsic good, moral, just. Here, and in many of Ovid's stories, both align remarkably well. The same is true with regard to what the narrator presents negatively, and what is presented as the opposite of the intrinsic. We have seen this explicitly above in the narrator's affirmation of Minos' justness (8.101) and criticism of Scylla's wickedness towards her father (8.94-5), and by implication of presenting Scylla's morals, values, and actions as being in contrast to those of the virtuous and pious Minos (as well as what her speeches show that she knows to be intrinsically just, moral, right). This correlation is true throughout the poem, and allows us to accept the narrator as explicitly holding an intrinsic approach to morality.⁴⁷

Summary

In the story of *Scylla* we have once again come across the depiction through contrast of intrinsic tenets (mainly focused around one's duties to others – family, city, countrymen), as well as the morals and values of the mixed (independent) approach to morality that Scylla appears to take, and which are in opposition to those depicted as intrinsic. We have also seen the presence of the mind-body dichotomy inherent in a character's metaphysical makeup. This is most obvious here in the presentation of reason and emotion as irreconcilable

⁴⁷ Further selected examples of what philosophical views presented throughout the poem as intrinsic and which are clearly shared by the narrator include that: prayer to the gods is good and mockery of them bad (e.g. *Lycaon*, 1.221; *Erisychthon*, 8.817; *Aesculapius*, 15.681); the killing a family member is wicked – regardless of circumstances (*Callisto*, 2.505; *Pentheus*, 3.731; *Medea*, 7.396); familial piety is good (*Ceyx & Alcyone*, 11.420; *Medea*, 7.72-3, 169ff); selfishness – spurning others by being too selfish and self-centred – is a negative (*Narcissus* – implied by the description of the words of those cursing Narcissus as being just 3.406); modesty/humility is a positive (*Niobe* – she would have been a perfect mother if she had not thought herself so “*et felicissima matrum/ dicta foret Niobe, si non sibi visa fuisset*” 6.155-6, the implication being that even pride in altruistic things should be limited); what is “lawful” is advocated, and “unlawful” criticized (which, in *Byblis*’ case is *not* incest, 9.633; *Medea*, 7.72-3); good treatment of guests is right (seen in the description of the Thracian homes as “*scelerata*” because of what happened to *Polydorus*, 13.628); sacrifice of self for others (or the gods) is good (*Cipus* – 15.613; *The Greeks at Aulis*, 12.29ff). To this we may add the lists of what the narrator considers to be virtuous and vicious which are found early in Book 1 in the narration of the story of *The Four Ages* (1.89-150). Here the narrator tells of the steady *moral* decline of man – as well as what this constitutes. Things presented as negative include tricks, plots, violence, love of gain, newly begun exploration and production (in the form of sailing, surveying and tilling of land, mining (which Wheeler, 2000, pp.23-4, sums this up as a “transgression of natural boundaries”), and war. Represented positively – partly by implication of these “acts of *impietas* that disturb religious, social, and familial order” (Wheeler, 2000, pp.23-4) – are a host’s respect of guest and family affection, shame, truth and faith “*pudor verumque fidesque*” (1.129), contentment with what nature provides, desire for wealth and possessions, family affection and duty, piety. The list goes on.

opposites. This explains the explicit themes of independence being linked with emotion, and both independence and emotion as being linked with self-interest. Tied to this concept is the idea of determinism, which primarily comes to light in the portrayal of characters as having no control over their natures, and the presentation of their characters and actions being inconsequential to their ultimate fates, since chance plays a large part in their respective endings. Thus while the mixed approach to morality is presented as likely to bring about its own destruction, if such characters meet with destruction, it does not necessary follow to be a logical result of their approach to morality. The inverse is true for the intrinsic approach and related success. This leads on to the idea that morality is inconsequential to the achievement of one's values (whether consciously held or not) in life. Nevertheless, a moral code based on intrinsic tenets (such as duty and selflessness) is given an explicitly positive evaluation, and the opposite (tied to selfishness, independent thought and emotion – which are all portrayed as linked) an explicitly negative one. Moreover, excess value for a moral or value, irrespective of which approach it is normally associated with, can bring destruction. All of this is consistent with the fact that these stories are being told by the narrator, whose views appear to be very much aligned with that which is presented as intrinsic. Lastly, we have the implication that favour by the gods is only temporary.

Chapter 4 – Meleager

As in *Scylla*, the central conflict of this story is a simple one, based around two characters, and over a moral issue. In contrast, this story is of significant length and deals with mortals of epic stature. Tragedy is ubiquitous.

There are several important points in this story. The first arises from the depiction of the two different conscious approaches to morality taken by the three key parties of the main conflict. In the character of Althaea, we see the intrinsic approach to morality – she follows certain moral stipulations in opposition to her own values and irrespective of the consequences for both herself and others; the mixed (independent) approach we find in Meleager's upholding of principles, which are not based solely on emotion, but are in contrast to those which are and have been presented as intrinsically moral. We also find a more emotion-influenced version of the mixed approach present in the irrational words and actions of Toxeus and Plexippus.

More importantly (with regard to the theme and underpinning philosophical outlook of this story), both of these approaches are presented as reaching their logical and likely negative consequences through their own key aspects. The intrinsic approach can lead to inherent contradictions, and the necessity of following the morals and values associated with this approach without consideration of context or consequences offers no way of escape. The mixed approach can lead to ruin because of the likelihood of the morals and values associated with it to be personal, influenced by emotion, and thus both potentially ignoring and bringing one into conflict with what is depicted as intrinsic, as well as potentially disregarding the likely consequences of one's action.

Another point of interest is the consistent depiction of heroic characters as being inherently flawed and fallible. This is depicted in their being undercut with humour and by the attribution to them of notably unepic words and actions. Further, we once again see the presence of an inherent mind-body dichotomy in characters, and the idea of determinism implied through the way this dichotomy influences characters' choices, actions, fates,

success and failure. This is further implied by the presence of several external forces (such as the Fates and the gods) determining characters' destinies. Also present and similar to what we have seen in the last three chapters are the themes of the destructive nature of both strong values and personal values, and of emotion-based action.

1. Introduction

The story of Meleager and the Calydonian boar-hunt is, compared to most other tales found within the *Metamorphoses*, epic in proportions as well as in style and content. Its main features are likewise manifold. Diana, having not received offerings made to the gods at a harvest festival, sends a boar of supernatural stature¹ to ravage the lands of Calydon in revenge. A band of young heroes is assembled to hunt the boar, including Meleager, his maternal uncles Toxeus and Plexippus, and the huntress Atalanta. The heroes exhibit comic ineptitude in the hunt until the boar is finally wounded by Atalanta and killed by Meleager who, after receiving the boar's head and hide as reward, gifts it to Atalanta, who he greatly admires. His uncles in jealousy, strip Atalanta of the prize and Meleager of the right to gift it, and are killed by Meleager as a consequence. His mother, Althaea, after much internal debate, in turn kills her son out of piety to her dead brothers. She then commits suicide as punishment for the impious crime of killing her son. The peoples of Calydon mourn their loss, and Meleager's sisters go into mourning and are finally transformed into birds by Diana, she having requited her anger.

The story of Meleager and the Calydonian boar-hunt is one that by Ovid's time, had long held a traditional place in myth as an epic event,² not only with regard to the scale of the actions, but also the heroic stature of those who committed them; particularly Meleager, a hero in the mould of Homer's Achilles.³ Keeping these traditional aspects of the tale in mind when reading the *Metamorphoses*' version, and by observing the ways in which Ovid differs from them, helps to highlight what is important in the latter's version with regard to the

¹ See Glenn (1986), p.106.

² Most notably: Hom. *Il.* 9.527-99; Callim. *Hymn* 3.219-24; Aes. *Choe.* 602-12; Hes. *Cat.* 98; Soph. *Mel*; Eurip. *Mel*; Bacc. 7.5; Acc. *Mel*; Dio. Sic. 4.34-5; an anonymous Elegiac Fragment; and various visual representations, most notably the Francois-Vase and the fragments of the Temple of Athena Alea by Skopas. See Hollis (1970) pp.66-9; Segal (1999); and Bömer (1969-86) on this passage for a detailed history of the myth.

³ A comparison aided by the use of the story of Meleager in Hom. *Il.* 9.527ff as a parallel to the circumstance in which Achilles finds himself.

individual characterisations and themes explicit in the story's outcomes. Particularly significant is the sheer volume and consistency of the unepic aspects found within Ovid's tale.

2. Conflict

Given that the story's tragic end is brought about by Althaea's response to Meleager's actions – the killing of his uncles, Toxeus and Plexippus, who are Althaea's brothers – we can see that the main conflict of this story is between Althaea and Meleager. Meleager v. his uncles can be eliminated as the main conflict as the outcome does not necessarily lead the story to end as it does. Nevertheless, this conflict is important as it is over the deaths of Toxeus and Plexippus that Meleager and Althaea come into conflict. This conflict is also important as it shows the key protagonist to be Meleager. It is he that *acts* to achieve something (the maintaining of his values); an act which consequentially brings him into indirect conflict with Althaea. Although Althaea is the emotional focus of the story and has the final choice and ultimately, action which brings the story to its resolution, this is only a response to Meleager's deed. She does not commit the action that moves the story.

Althaea actively seeks the values of piety and justice for her dead brothers in the form of revenge against their killer; Meleager's goal is to maintain his rights, as well as those of one he loves, by revenging himself upon those that threatened them. Thus we have the common link, the issue over which mother and son come into conflict – the killing of Toxeus and Plexippus, by Meleager, her son and their nephew.

In summary, the central conflict is Meleager v. Althaea, over the deaths of Toxeus and Plexippus.

Note that I exclude Diana from the statement of the main conflict. This is merely because she is not presented as taking any active part in it. She provides the inciting incident and the context in which the story's actions are played out, but does not appear to influence how these occur.

3. Plot-development

Backstory and establishment of the situation

We are introduced to the story of Meleager by way of Theseus⁴ and his participation in the famous Calydonian boar-hunt (8.270).⁵ The narrator then gives us the backstory to this event, namely, the conflict between the goddess Diana and the inhabitants of Calydon. Oeneus had dishonoured Diana by passing her by at a harvest festival,⁶ and she, in revenge, sent a huge boar to ravage his lands (8.280).⁷ This is the inciting incident which leads, through another conflict – that of Meleager and the chosen band of youths against the boar⁸ – to that between Meleager and his uncles. The narration of the boar-hunt itself provides the context in which the character of Meleager is introduced in both action and word, largely by comparison to the other heroes around him. Although Meleager's uncles are present, they are not named specifically until after their threats to Meleager, and their relationship to him is not revealed until after their deaths. Also notable here is the uncles' inaction – even compared to other lesser members of the company. This, and the fact that they are only ever included in disparaging general statements about the others, constitutes the entirety of material for their characterisation until their challenge to Meleager. The character of Atalanta is also prominently introduced as part of the establishment, and Meleager's feelings for her are made apparent.⁹ Next to Meleager, she is given the most prominent part in the boar-hunt.

⁴ Whose participation in the hunt is striking in its insignificance given the grandeur with which he is used to introduce the story (I shall speak more on Theseus' role presently). See Glenn (1986).

⁵ On the contextualisation of the story of the boar-hunt with those around it, see particularly Boyd (2006).

⁶ Whether intentionally or not is not stated, nor is it important, since we are told that Diana is one of the gods desirous of honour (8.277), and would presumably have reacted in the same way for either case.

⁷ 8.290-5. These excesses of anger, in comparison to the seemingly small-scale nature of the crime, fit in well with what we saw in *Ceres* with regard to the gods' keen interest in how they are perceived and treated by mortals, and with the fact that they too are capricious and at the mercy of their passions. See Newlands (2005), who speaking on the influence of emotion even in the punishments of Juppiter, says something equally applicable to this story: "the crime seems completely out of proportion to the punishment, human annihilation. The other gods moreover are represented as selfish and sycophantic, caring only that their sacrificial offerings are not lost" (pp.486-7). See also Hollis (1970) on this passage.

⁸ See Bömer (1969-86) on 8.298-328 for a discussion of which heroes – before they became famous – were present here and in the other extant ancient literary and visual representations of this event.

⁹ Note that Atalanta is not actually named thus in this version of the story, she is simply "*Nonacrina*" (8.426). I think it likely that this is partly to distinguish her from the Atalanta of Book 10 (560-707), but more likely for the purpose of using the epithet "*Nonacrina*" – which suggests association with the other nymphs described thus, and their fates of being overcome by males, something which highlights the ironic nature of Atalanta of this story surpassing them ("*Nonacrina Atalanta*" is found in *Ars Am.* 2.185, thus emphasising her use here as an elegiac symbol). Figures also given this epithet in the *Metamorphoses* include a nymph of the woods, devoted to Diana and loving of the hunt (2.409ff) – raped by Juppiter; and Syrinx (1.690) who had many suitors and was also devoted to Diana. The fact that the latter is described as being spotted by Pan on Mount Lycaeus

The boar-hunt itself is all part of the establishment of the situation. This section ends in the wounding of the boar by Atalanta, Meleager's statement that she shall be rewarded for her actions, and finally, the boar's death at the hand of Meleager. By this point, the stage is effectively set, and the build-up to the climax begins. However, the character of Althaea is yet to be introduced. As with Minos in the *Scylla* story, we do not learn anything about Althaea until we see her reaction to her brothers' corpses – long after Meleager's main actions. This once again shows that the establishment of the situation and the rise to the climax are partially overlapping.

Build up

The beginning of the rise to the climax starts at 8.425, when Meleager, having killed the boar, gives it as a prize to Atalanta, for her part in the hunt. When Meleager makes his intentions regarding the prize clear, we subsequently see the uncles' actions (combined with threats of further force), followed by Meleager's instantaneous and deadly response. At this point we have seen Meleager's character and been shown the authenticity of his feelings in action. Although this constitutes the point of no return for Meleager, and it is here that he makes and acts upon his final decision for his part in the main conflict, we have yet to reach the climax of the values at stake – the point at which the outcome of Meleager's life and Althaea's revenge are determined. This is nevertheless one of the actions from which the final outcome stems, and it is at this that we need to look when later identifying the story's explicit themes.

The rise to the climax continues through Althaea's discovery of what has happened,¹⁰ and we learn about the log which Althaea possesses and its relation to Meleager's fate, and of Althaea's attempts to throw it into the fire and yet hold herself back at the same time. This is the climax. In this scene Althaea (as Scylla did before her), soliloquizes on what she should do: be dutiful to her dead brothers by revenging herself on their killer and murdering her son;

(1.698), and the nymph in Book 2 as the daughter of Lycaeus (2.496, 526) further supports this theory. Atalanta (as I will continue to call her for the discussion of this story, the name being traditionally associated with this figure) is also described as Lycaean (8.317). For a full discussion of the ancient accounts of figures named Atalanta, see Barringer (1996).

¹⁰ Note that only here is it stated explicitly that the two killed were Meleager's uncles. The only references to the uncles earlier were as the "*Thestiadae*" (8.304). The relationship between Thestius and Meleager is present in the early accounts of this story given in: Aes. *Choe.* 602-12; Eurip. frag. 515; Dio. Sic 4.34-5; and implicit in Hom. *Il.* 9.527-99.

or stay her hand and let her motherly duty override all other moral obligations to her dead brothers. This is not only the climax of the plot but the emotional focus of the story. The climax starts at 8.449, and continues until line 512. It is here that the *final* decision is made with regard to the central conflict, and after which we can tell, essentially, what will ultimately happen. This is emphasised by Althaea's inner conflict being entirely played out in the first person, rather than merely reported second-hand by the narrator.

Resolution

The dénouement follows upon Althaea's action of throwing the fatal log into the fire, and the central conflict is resolved with Meleager's death concurrent with the log's consumption. This is followed by Althaea's suicide out of guilt for her deed: "conscious of her harsh deed she exacted punishment with the driving of a sword through her heart"¹¹ "*diri sibi conscia facti/ exegit poenas acto per viscera ferro*" (8.531-2), and widespread mourning of Meleager's death. Diana's wrath abates, having adequately avenged herself on Oeneus' house, and she transforms most of Meleager's sisters, who have given themselves over to grief, into birds.

4. Characterisation

While Meleager and Althaea are the only two active participants in the main conflict, the characters of the uncles are nevertheless important with regard to Meleager's motivations for his actions.

Toxeus' and Plexippus' key actions are their seizure of Meleager's gifts to Atalanta, and their threats towards him. As noted earlier, they are characterised before this point only through their notable absence from the preceding actions, and with the majority of the huntsmen as having blushed with shame (8.388) when Meleager complimented Atlanta's deed. The former shows their inefficacy as heroes and the injustice of their claiming Meleager's prize for themselves, and the latter implies that they care either about being, or being seen to be,

¹¹ Although perhaps "womb" would be a better translation for "*viscera*", since it is specifically her un-motherly action that she is punishing – emphasised by the use of "*matre*" in the preceding line. See Segal (1999), p.325.

inadequate.¹² Their following actions (8.388-90) further suggest that it is appearance that counts, not actual deeds. They are among the men who dip their spear tips in the blood of the boar, symbolic of the fact that they took part in the hunt and were victorious, but emphasised by the narrator's words (8.422-4) to be an empty action. In effect they show a desire to share the glory even though they committed no action worthy of earning it.¹³ When the uncles deprive Atalanta of the gifts, they do not try to justify their actions in any way, but only assert (obviously without justification) that the honours are theirs "*titulus... nostros*" (8.433) and use threats to achieve their ends.¹⁴ It is therefore implied by the fact that they took from Meleager the right of giving "*ius muneris*" (8.436), merely out of jealousy – presumably stemming from the emotions of the moment. As a whole, they are characterised as not only unskilful (in comparison with both Meleager and Atalanta), but irrationally greedy, of low self-esteem (evidenced by their desire for unearned praise and glory), and barbaric in their recourse to threats to get their way; thus not deserving the "*titulus*" (8.433) they demand.¹⁵ This is emphasised by Meleager's open statement of the difference between himself and his uncles: "learn how far threats are distant from deeds" "*discite.../ facta minis quantum distent*" (8.438-9), followed by proof of this in action.¹⁶

Finally, the fact that Meleager instantly and with ease kills the uncles in response to their threats is proof that they did not expect him to *do* anything to defend himself/Atalanta (and, by implication, assumed he was just a talker, like themselves). Additionally, the description of Plexippus as not expecting, nor fearing such an attack (8.440), shows that he at least does not take the great hero's reactions into account. That the uncles are motivated to seek the unearned, and do so either without considering the context or consequences to the full extent, categorises them as among those who hold a mixed approach to morality. That they do consider it at least partially is shown by their words to Atalanta about Meleager's inability to

¹² This is supported by the description of the band of youths as "desiring of praise" "*cupidine laudis*" at the beginning of the hunt (8.300) – which suggests that it was primarily for their appearance in the eyes of others that they joined the hunt.

¹³ There are many elements of traditional epic included in this most epic of section in the *Metamorphoses*. There are a plethora of epic touches found throughout, in language, style and content – discussed later. It is interesting that it is this one, the act of dipping one's spear tip into the blood of the dead, perhaps the most unheroic of them all (found in Homer *Il.* 22.371) is that which is used consciously by the unheroic heroes to prove their heroism.

¹⁴ They have no claim on the rewards through actions; they are never mentioned in the narration of the hunt.

¹⁵ See Anderson (1972) on 8.441.

¹⁶ Note the use of "*discite*" the same word used by Ancaeus (8.392) before his death, thus suggesting that Meleager may meet the same fate for actions which are supposed to demonstrate the proof of a point.

come to their aid. As with Scylla, their choices and actions clearly have a significant emotional element.

Meleager's character and motivations are yet simpler to understand. We learn from the narrator's introduction to the story that Meleager is a hero of some stature (8.267-70). This is proved in action by the way Meleager outshines all the other hero-participants in the boar-hunt (including Theseus¹⁷). Not only is it he that kills the boar, but he is the only participant other than Atalanta who does not fail completely. He is also outstanding in his admiration for Atalanta, first of her physical appearance (8.324-6) then her actions (8.384-5), even going so far as to say that her manly qualities will be deservedly rewarded "*meritum... feres virtutis honorem*" (8.387); a prediction that he himself soon fulfils (8.425ff). This shows an esteem for heroic deeds, a certain amount of self-esteem (in that he praises Atalanta before he had yet wounded the boar), integrity (in the keeping of his word), and implies a belief in principles and honour.

It is noteworthy that Meleager is not portrayed as speaking and acting like this simply because he is overcome by love for Atalanta – something which would have been easy to portray far more clearly. This is evidenced by the fact that when he first sees Atalanta, he says "O fortunate one, if any man will be deemed worthy by her" "*o felix, siquem dignabitur.../ ista virum!*" (8.326-7) – the point being that he assigns to her the choice of her man, he does not say "I shall have her" or "happy the man who wins her"; he is in control of his emotions. Similarly we are also told that he longed for her, even with a god opposing "*renuente deo*" (8.324-6); words which suggest that it is his *conscious* decision that holds him back.¹⁸ This is consistent with the fact that, as we learn later, he already had a wife

¹⁷ The significance being that Theseus has just been presented as a hero (and has a tradition of being one of the quintessential heroes of Greco-Roman mythology – see particularly Plutarch's *Life of Theseus* as an example) and thus comparison with him is a compliment to Meleager. The stature of Meleager as among the greatest of heroes is traditional; in Homer (*Il.* 9.527-99), Phoenix uses him as an example comparable to Achilles, and in Bacchylides (Book 7, No.5) he is compared favorably with Heracles.

¹⁸ Hollis (1970), on 8.325, states that no particular god is here intended and cites Tibullus 1.5.20 as evidence. Whether this is the case or not (the god mentioned in the Tibullus reference is supposed to be Cupid), it is probably that these words serve for one of two purposes. They may be to clarify that there was no god active in *promoting* these desires in deliberate contrast to the Homeric situation Ovid is parodying (*Il.* 14.294ff) where Zeus, bewitched by Aphrodite's charms, desires to sleep with Hera. This would also liken Meleager to a god (Hollis 1970, on 8.324-5, cites Verg. *Ec.* 8.41 and Theoc. 2.82 for comparison). The other option, which I think more likely, is that "*deo*" means *divinity* and represents Diana who, as implied later on (8.542-3), is at base responsible for the outcome of all the events in this story. In this case, the implication would be that the outcome of characters' decisions and actions are ultimately out of their control. This, as I touch upon later, is consistent with the poem's overall philosophical outlook. This would also be consistent with there being no

(8.521), to whom he would be expected to be loyal.¹⁹ Thus Atalanta is not merely the object of an irrational love, but a concrete example of his conscious values, and so it is only natural that when endangered, he, as a hero, should defend her.

Meleager's values and principles are also clear in his treatment of his uncles. The values Meleager seeks through the action of killing Toxeus and Plexippus are self-evident from his words and the context of their actions: safety and honour, both for himself and for Atalanta, whom he values; and teaching his uncles (in no uncertain terms) the consequences of actions such as theirs. Given Meleager's depiction as a character who thinks about what he is doing and has an awareness of morality, the moral foundation for his motivations are equally easy to understand. They are implied by the context: his belief in his right to defend what he sees as *his* rights, including maintaining his values (including both his possessions and Atalanta), the preservation of his honour, and his freedom to be independent – specifically the freedom to do what he wants with his own possessions. Included among these motivations must be some kind of belief in the morality of exacting justice upon those who have wronged him. Again this suggests that in his defence of Atalanta, it is not merely his values, but his moral principles for which Meleager fights.²⁰ However, it should be made clear that he is not

active divine agency in this particular instance – i.e. Meleager made his choice out of free will; the god/goddess just denied that in the long-run he should get that for which he wished "*optavit*."

¹⁹ His having a wife (mentioned also in *Heroides* 3.91ff) also sheds some light on the "*pudor*" (8.327) he felt upon loving Atalanta earlier ("*pudor*" was last used at 8.157, and there unquestionably describes a shameful thing): i.e. he was not modest or shy, as is proven by his open actions and words later, but quite probably *ashamed* because he already had a wife. It is quite possible, that this "*pudor*" comes from a self-knowledge that this love for Atalanta is something Meleager consciously did not want but could not necessarily control (remembering that emotions throughout the *Metamorphoses* are not presented as results of value-judgments but primaries without cause) and thus "*pudor*" is a way of showing Meleager's moral qualities. If this is the case Meleager is in this poem unique, in that every other character who has an emotion/passion come upon them which they do not want or which they consciously know to be immoral or irrational, succumbs to it and either fails or does not attempt to resist it. Throughout the *Metamorphoses*, "*pudor*" is presented as a moral virtue and seems to mean bad feeling at being seen to have done wrong – i.e. although the characters do not necessarily believe they have done wrong, they know what is wrong in others' eyes. In the *Metamorphoses*, this is basically equal to having done wrong (see 7.144-6), and in several instances is specifically contrasted with one giving over to the emotions of love (1.618, 7.72, 9.515).

²⁰ Regarding the high esteem in which Meleager holds honour and the fact that he revenges himself violently on those who do not respect it, it is worth noting that these precedents have already been set by the goddess Diana early in the story (8.227-80). The words "when Latonis was satisfied with the destruction of the house of Parthaon's descendants..." "*quas Parthaoniae tandem Latonia clade/ exsatiata domus...*" 8.542-3, at the end of the story (not merely after the boar's or Meleager's death) suggest that the preceding actions were all part of Diana's revenge. Note that Diana uses the plurals "*non ... feremus*" and "*non ... dicemur*" (8.279-80) – i.e. *we* will not bear it, *we* will not be said – which suggests that she is not merely acting on personal injury, but upholding a broad principle. Meleager, acting for both himself and Atalanta is acting in much the same way – emphasised by the fact that he does not state that he is revenging *himself* or Atalanta specifically, but is teaching the uncles what their actions in principle deserve. That he does not specify which threats, and to whose honour he is referring, further supports this.

merely an egotist of the kind who has no consideration for others (like Scylla or his own uncles). When he is dying he prays to all of his family, and laments only his “*ignavo... leto*” (8.518) at the moment of death.²¹

Thus we have in Meleager a hero of self-esteem and self-confidence, one who is very Homeric in character, in that he is a hero in body (shown by his physical prowess and skill) and mind (depicted through his magnanimity, courage, principled nature and eloquence). The expression of his wrath is also Homeric; Meleager is not merely affronted at the crimes committed against them, but frenzied in the passion of his response.²² Here at least (as opposed to the majority of the cases in the *Metamorphoses*), a character’s emotions coincide with his consciously held principles, and in Meleager we have another character who has a mixed approach to morality – although one seemingly less influenced by emotion than that of his uncles. He does not act purely on emotion, but thinks about what he is doing, shows an awareness of morality, and strictly upholds certain principles. However, this is not because they are intrinsically mandated, but apparently because he has judged them through some other means to be moral. This is further evidenced by the fact that the principles he upholds are based primarily around personal values, and are followed in spite of intrinsic ones – that of treating relatives well, regardless of context.

Finally, we have the character of Althaea. From the first lines of her introduction, we learn that she is pious (we first see her bearing gifts to the temples of a god, 8.445-6). Her instantaneous reaction to learning that it is her son who has killed her brothers is to take the brothers’ side, suggests that either she has more personal affection for her brothers than her son, or that the idea of piety and duty to one’s kin is sacrosanct and ingrained. The narrator confirms that this second option is the real one “mother and sister fight, and the two names

²¹ Judging from the six other uses of this adjective in the *Metamorphoses*, I take “*ignavo*” here to mean inactive/ inefficacious (as in 2.763, 821, 8.73, 11.593 – it would also be poignant to take 5.550 this way given the context of the story). The remainder of the line confirms this translation: the narrator mentions that Meleager also laments a death “*sine sanguine*” and 8.519, in which he is said to have “called the wounds of Ancaeus lucky” “*Ancae felicia vulnera dicit.*”

²² This action is an example of epic “*ira*,” an extremely sudden and violent outburst of anger, often seemingly out of all proportion to the context, and very often, explicitly irrational, stemming from a sudden and passionate outburst of emotion when a hero’s values are endangered or violated. This is typical of Meleager’s portrayal as an epic hero. Furthermore, it is important to note that the uncles are in fact presented just like Agamemnon in the *Iliad*, who also takes away what has already been given and strips one (Achilles) of rights given him by common consent. This parallel is clearly deliberate, and serves to link the two situations and suggests parallels in their results, and thematic meaning. This is apt, since it is in the *Iliad* that Meleager’s tale is used to draw parallels to the situation of Achilles (9.527ff).

drag one heart in diverse ways” “*pugnat materque sororque,/ et diversa trahunt unum duo nomina pectus*” (8.463-4).²³

However, a more important point emanating from lines 8.463-74 is that the problem of Althaea’s situation, the reason she finds herself beset with such an internal conflict as a result of Meleager’s actions, stems from her approach to morality. She holds that she must be pious and dutiful both by her dead brothers, and to their killer – her son. Why she holds these duties/ values is not revealed, only that she does so and that she is torn because of their contradiction. This is evidence of the intrinsic quality of these duties – they are not presented as chosen independently.²⁴ Note that it is no coincidence that Althaea is first shown sacrificing; this shows what kind of person she is – one who worships a higher power. It is therefore completely consistent that what she holds as moral stems also from something beyond her own independent judgment, and that she has therefore no means of satisfactorily extricating herself from the contradictory nature of the mandated duties and actions. Thus her moral code has put her in a position where a happy outcome is impossible.

In order to make the oddity of the situation clear, she emphasises the fact that while her actions are pious “*pianda est*” (8.483) and a duty “*officium*” (8.489), she also knows that: it is worthy of punishment (8.478); it is wicked “*nefas*” (8.483); and it is a crime “*scelus*” (8.484). She further indicates that she knows what her values should be in comparison to what she is doing: “where is my maternal feeling? Where are the pious obligations of a parent?” “*mens ubi materna est? ubi sunt pia iura parentum*” (8.499). While the choice she has to make is a moral one, it is nevertheless not such a simple issue for Althaea of rationally weighing up one’s duty dispassionately – we are told early on that her tears turned into a love “*amorem*” of punishment (8.450) – the point being that she is driven on by a strong emotion.²⁵ The passionate conflict depicted in Althaea’s speech and doubt-scene shows her as someone to

²³ A fragment from the lost drama *Meleager* by the 2nd-1st century B.C. Roman writer Accius (frag. 443) shows that her internal conflict was not original to Ovid, and provides evidence for another author to whom certain aspects of Ovid’s tale may be indebted, and to whom he may be consciously alluding. On Accius’ influence on Ovid, see Hollis (1970), pp.xxiv-v, and on 8.290.

²⁴ Supported by the fact that not only is the context of her brothers’ deaths important to her, but she is never shown to enquire into the circumstances – what is important to her is that they have died, and their murderer must be punished; Meleager should not have killed his uncles.

²⁵ That she is overwhelmed by strong emotions is again implied by the statement that one moment she is afraid on account of the wickedness of her deed “*sceleris*” (8.465 – the word order of the line suggests that “*sceleris*” is more than just the narrator’s evaluation of her action, but actually Althaea’s evaluation of it) and the next, anger “*ira*” (8.466. Compare also 469-70, 473-4). Thus when we are told that she begins to waver towards being a better sister than parent (475-6), we know the choice is hardly likely to have been completely rational.

whom neither alternative sits comfortable. She only acts as she does as a result of an event of extremely significant personal importance. The extent to which her emotions play a part is stressed by her statements of what it is that draws her piety to one side or another – it is nearly always something based on the perceptual level – vivid images of one side or another triumphing or failing. Although she sways between principles, she wavers on account of her emotions. Finally however, she makes her decision, and this seems to be done (although subconsciously) by reference to a third intrinsic principle, that of sacrifice of the self to others (or to a higher principle – other than oneself). The path she takes is the more virtuous one according to this idea – she deprives herself of a more personal value in the death of Meleager than she would have by ignoring what she saw as her duty to her dead brothers.

Evaluation of characters

Ovid gives us so little material for characterisation of the uncles that a detailed evaluation of their characters is impossible. Nevertheless, although no trouble is taken to condemn or have the other characters condemn them, they are shown as both weak willed and cowardly, and their actions unquestionably lead to their destruction, something which is logical given the emotional element in their approach to morality.

Meleager's character can be evaluated by further information. He is generally depicted in a positive light and as virtuous – he is family-aware, principled and honourable. Furthermore, he does not give himself over to emotion completely at his first vision of Atalanta. Although a passionate anger is certainly present when he kills his uncles, this is traditional for an epic hero and tied to his conscious principles. The uncles criticise Meleager for being “*captus amore*” (8.435), but given their characterisation, and that of Meleager, it can be seen that this is primarily a provocation and not necessarily an accusation supported by the reality of the situation.

Nevertheless, the narrator clearly labels Meleager's deed as wicked by calling his sword impious “*nefando*” (8.439), and Althaea expresses the same sentiment repeatedly, claiming that his deed was a crime “*scelus*” (8.484), and that he deserves to die (8.492-3).²⁶ That these two opinions coincide, and that they are both spoken by figures who are depicted as knowing

²⁶ See also 8.497, 503.

what is intrinsically just and moral, puts a negative spin on Meleager's presentation. In corroboration of this, it cannot be forgotten that he dies as a result of his actions, and that the action itself is presented throughout the *Metamorphoses* as intrinsically impious. Here the fact that it was done in anger over a personal issue makes it condemnable, regardless of the context. Thus Meleager's virtues (with regard to his own approach to morality) play a crucial role in leading to his destruction, and explains why the sympathy implied by the narrator's initial words about the general Calydonian mourning for his death, are somewhat hollow.²⁷

Althaea's internal struggle is portrayed as being extremely difficult and painful, but is not presented as something for which sympathy should necessarily be given. Her conflict is essentially between duty to her brothers or her son, and both of these are presented as being intrinsically moral values. However, the narrator calls her deed wicked "*sceleris*" (8.465), cruel "*crudele*" (8.467) and both pious and impious "*impietate pia est*" (8.477) – an evaluation often emphasised by Althaea herself (see above). Furthermore, as Hollis (1970) suggests with regard to 8.450 – in which Althaea is described as conceiving a love for punishment "*poenae... amorem*" – the juxtaposition of these two words "is paradoxical, and implies Ovid's own criticism of Althaea" as she ignores the fact that Meleager is kin by blood, something further emphasised in 8.475-6. While this is undoubtedly so, Hollis misses the point when he says that Althaea kills Meleager because "the brother stands higher than the child" (pp.91-2), for while this is so *in this moment of emotion*, the fact that she kills herself later when she is faced with the death of her son implies that Althaea's hierarchy of duties are in reality not so clear cut. Given that Althaea appears to be acting upon what she sees as intrinsically moral duties and values, her fault is not in the choice to neglect one or the other, but in holding these moral duties so strongly – partly at least as a result of her strong emotions and personal value of each.

On account of this, as with her brothers and son, her destruction is shown to be a logical outcome of such actions. That it comes through her own hand (that she had the moral acumen to see that she had done wrong and punish herself, 8.531-2 – something shown as being logical given her character) is a redeeming factor in Althaea's presentation, as is her intrinsic approach to morality. She does not make her decision consciously upon her own values, rather, she is pious and self-sacrificial – neither of which are in themselves criticised by the narrator. In summary, Althaea is presented by her actions as neither particularly bad nor

²⁷ See Hollis (1970) on 8.526-46.

particularly good, rather, she is merely placed in a situation by the nature of the universe from which it is impossible to emerge with a good character. She could do worse.

5. Theme

The statement of the plot-theme of this story can be written as follows: *a hero is provoked into killing his maternal uncles, thereby inciting his mother to pious revenge*. The main conflict takes the form of Meleager v. Althaea over the deaths of Toxeus and Plexippus. The events occur as a result of the uncles' disregard for Meleager's rights, Meleager's commitment to his morals and values, and Althaea's moral quandary. Death comes to all: to the uncles at the hand of Meleager; to Meleager by the will of Althaea; and to Althaea by her own hand.

The uncles' deaths at the hand of Meleager, after attempting to deprive him of his rights and Atalanta of her possessions, are once again presented as fates arising logically as a result of their characters, their actions, and the context. Toxeus and Plexippus are not presented as having any valid claim on the prize. They are (and have proved to be throughout the preceding story) far from the equals of Meleager in word or deed (primarily the latter), and act without consideration of the seemingly obvious and deadly potential consequences. To all intents and purposes, they appear to be ultimately driven by their emotions. Hence they misjudge Meleager, fail to take the likely negative consequences into account, and meet the kind of fate to be logically expected given their characters and statures. The primary theme explicit in their fates is one which we have already seen in the case of Scylla: emotion-based action is destructive.

The reasons for Meleager's downfall are a little more complex. The emotion-based actions of the uncles were ineffective, and immediately brought about their deaths; Meleager's on the other hand, while immediately effective with regard to the values he pursues, are presented as opposing that which is depicted as an intrinsic duty – family members' lives should be treated as sacrosanct, no matter what the context. This indirectly brings on the retribution of one who holds to such intrinsic duties, specifically revenge for murdered family members, no matter what the context.

Meleager commits this action because of the morals and values he holds (including his honour, possessions, and principles), all of which, as befits a hero in the Homeric mould, are based around personal concerns. Thus the very qualities which make him a hero aid his ruin, and two themes are presented. The first theme is that the upholding of personal values is itself destructive. This is shown through the contrast between these personal values and those depicted as intrinsic and, as we know from what we have already seen in the stories discussed earlier, the high likelihood of these different kinds of values coming into conflict. In essence, Meleager ignored duties to others and acted in accordance with his purely personal values, with no regard to the intrinsically vicious qualities of his actions, and draws on his own death as a consequence. The second theme is not specific to certain types of morals and values but, as we have also seen in the previous stories, is more broadly applicable: that the holding of strong values aids destruction. Here, it is the extent of Meleager's values and his inflexible adherence to his moral code that ultimately lead to his death. Had he cared less for his rights, for Atalanta, or for his honour, he would not have been so frenzied in his rage and violent in their defence – actions which ultimately led to his downfall.

In contrast to the uncles and Meleager, Althaea adheres to an intrinsic moral code, but this too is shown to bring her ruin by virtue the fact that even this code is ineffective when the tenets it upholds prove contradictory. Here, the potentially destructive nature of this approach to morality is an explicit theme. Even though Meleager is her son, Althaea's belief in duty to avenge her brothers is the factor which brings about her own downfall, as it was the ultimate factor in bringing about Meleager's eventual death. However, it is not just "duty to one's brothers" that is the underlying issue, but the fact that Althaea's moral code required her to be dutiful to both son and brothers, and thus forced her into a situation where a moral choice was required and thus, inevitably, immoral action. Such an approach is therefore fallible as it can lead to contradictory situations. The theme of the destructive nature of strong values is also present in Althaea's ruin. Had she not held to her duties and values so consistently, she would not have taken such extreme action as to murder her son, or felt the need to commit suicide for being the cause of his loss.²⁸ The theme of emotion-based action leading to destruction is also present here. Althaea brings death upon herself and her son through overzealous adherence to the principles of duty to family – something which is helped by the strong

²⁸ It is interesting to note that while we earlier saw that intrinsic duties in Ovid are treated very much like Cicero's view of them, with regard to both their sources and what they are, they differ in that Cicero at least allows context to be taken into account when two appear contradictory. See particularly *De Off.* 1.2.4, 1.9.30, 1.10.31, 2.4.18-19, and *De Fin.* 4.19.55.

emotions of the moment. It is the emotions she feels at the sight of her dead brothers that plunges her into such a grief as to be passionate about revenge. It is presumably through more than mere altruistic duty to her son that she is so grieved as to punish herself for bringing about his death.

6. Overall Philosophical Outlook

The explicit depiction of Althaea's approach to morality as inherently flawed and, therefore, potentially destructive, is reflective of a broader underlying philosophical idea present in this story: that morality in general is metaphysically ineffective – impotent in giving one a better chance at long-term success, happiness, or a positive fate – no matter what code of morality one holds.

This provides a common link between the negative fates of all the characters who are key to the main conflict. Apart from the explicit depiction of Althaea's intrinsic approach to morality as fallible, we see it also in the fates of the uncles and Meleager, which implicitly depict the fallibility of both extremes of the mixed approach to morality. Both of the conscious approaches to morality given in this story (the subjective approach is not present) are shown as potentially, if not logically, leading to destruction, for oneself or for others, and implies the inefficacy of that morality. The decidedly subjective example of the mixed approach (embodied in the uncles) blinds one to reality, to reason, to context and consequences, and to that which is presented as intrinsically moral, just, virtuous, valuable and right. At the other end of the spectrum, the consciously principled mixed approach (of Meleager) has the potential to cause one to act in opposition to all of the above, and is likely to be associated with emotion, with personal values, and thus to bring destruction. The intrinsic approach (Althaea's), although the values and morals associated with it are depicted as virtuous and are not criticised, contains the possibility of inherent contradictions, and by its very nature can bring destruction through ignoring context and consequences.

Despite the above, the intrinsic approach is presented by far the most positively. The morals and values associated with it in this story are not criticised in themselves (note that Althaea's *passion*, the emotionalistic, unintrinsic element, is criticised) – often being called “pious” and “dutiful” – terms that denote actions which are presented in a positive light throughout the

Metamorphoses – but only in the way they oppose other intrinsic values and morals when in conflict with them. Thus the holding of such an intrinsicist code is implied to be proper, although it is likely to lead to situations where no completely moral action is possible.

The above depiction of the inefficacy of morality is in agreement with the deterministic aspect of the poem's philosophical outlook, which has already been identified in the previous stories. If it is not primarily one's own actions, decisions, character, values, and morality that matter with regard to the quality of one's life or ultimate fate – if these are primarily determined by factors (either internal or external) outside one's understanding or control – then one can expect little gain from holding and acting according to a moral code consistently or persevering in the attempt to achieve one's values. In this story, determinism is present in the influence of external determining forces, such as the gods and Fates, and the form of an inherent mind-body dichotomy (reason and emotion) within the characters' metaphysical makeup.

In this story we see several manifestations of this dichotomy. In the characters of the uncles, we have examples of action that is based, so it is implied, on emotion, which is both irrational and seemingly out of touch with reality. In Althaea's case, we see the other extreme. She tries to live by reason alone, but this effectively paralyses her. She is unable to choose between two opposing but seemingly equally valid moral obligations, both of which, and at the same time neither of which, are in accordance with her emotions. Her emotions help her make a choice between the two, but this nevertheless leads to misery and, as seen from her later actions, the choice she ultimately makes is not in harmony with either her reason or emotion. As she is characterised, the same result is implied had she taken the alternate option. As far as Meleager goes, he is almost midway between the two. He is logical and principled, but his emotions – as shown by his love for Atalanta and his desire to uphold personal values – are a factor which compels him to act according to principles which blind him to his duties to his family members, and so facilitates his ruin.

There are several references to external determining factors in this story. Firstly, there is the figure of Diana, from whom the events of the story ultimately stem. It is due to her neglect at the hands of Oeneus that the boar is sent to ruin Calydon. That this is not the full extent of her influence is suggested by the fact that it is long after the boar has been slain and only after Oeneus' house has, along with Calydon, been laid waste that we are told that Diana was satisfied with what had occurred (8.542-3). This implies, therefore, that the fates of Meleager,

the uncles, Althaea, and the inhabitants of Calydon, were all influenced by her in some less obvious way. Nevertheless, given the number of other determining agencies present in this story, it is clear that Diana alone should not be taken as responsible for its events.

Also present are the Fates, who are presented as crucial in bringing about the story's outcome. Before the main action takes place, they provide the means for Althaea to destroy Meleager, and are shown as taking an active role. They do not merely inform Althaea that the log has power over her son; they are identified as making it so. While they do not influence how Althaea could or should use this knowledge, their very nature (as the Fates) implies that they are in fact the ones that determine what will come to pass in the long term.²⁹ Additionally, we hear that Ancaeus spoke words "*contra sua fata*" (8.391). The implication is that he had a certain destiny *fated* (i.e. long term determinism in advance) and his words and intentions were contradictory to it, and thus came to nought. In a similar vein, it is no coincidence that Ancaeus who, swollen with pride, boasted against Diana, was stabbed by the boar, a servant of Diana, in the groin "*inguina*" (8.400) – the parts of his anatomy he had just suggested were better than Atalanta's.³⁰ Finally, there are the words "*renuente deo*" (8.325), linked to Meleager's love for Atalanta (see n.18 above).³¹ Irrespective of the interpretation of this phrase, it is yet again a reference to an external agency influencing a character's choices, actions, or fate.³²

²⁹ References to the Fates' ("*triplices... sorores*" 8.452, who we saw earlier in *Ceres*) determining influence include that of their spinning the fatal threads "*stamina... fatalia*" (8.453 – as Hollis, 1970, notes on this line, this idea of the Fates spinning out one's destiny at birth appears as early as Homer. See also Dietrich 1962); and the description of the billet which they throw into the fire as "fateful" "*fatale*" (8.479). This shows the ultimate weakness of mortals even as great and physically efficacious as Meleager when up against the will of the Fates.

³⁰ This possibly, although for me not conclusively, suggests that the power of the Fates is in some way effected through the actions of Diana and her boar, and that even the gods' actions are here presented as being ultimately dictated in advance by the Fates. Their participation in this story seems to have a long tradition, stemming at least back to Aeschylus' *Choephoroi*, 610-12.

³¹ Note that I exclude from this list the references made by Althaea to the triple goddesses, the Eumenides (8.481-2), on whom she calls, and whose activity would be particularly apt because of their being used for family matters (famously found in such a role in Aeschylus' *Eumenides*). However, given that the log has already been said to be tied to Meleager's life, and all Althaea needs to do is put it in the fire, there is no evidence here of such an active role. Indeed, as Hollis (1970) notes on this passage, their presence seems to be borrowed from Hom. *Il.* 567ff, in whose version of the tale there is no fatal log or equivalent, and in which the Furies play a more active part.

³² It is my belief that this idea of determinism is also reflected in the quasi-personification of inanimate objects. An almost active role in the events is ascribed to them, thus suggesting further removal of characters' fates from their own control, and further implying that what happens is not merely chance. One of the many examples can be found in tree-root upon which Telemon tripped which, as Hollis (1970) observes, is "almost personified as an active malevolent force." Similarly, in the description of the flames which devoured Meleager's log as "*inimicos*" (8.461) and unwilling "*invitus*" (8.514).

Further underpinning the outcomes of the characters in this story, and relating to the realm of metaphysics, is the inefficacy of the heroic and its associated virtues. This is largely highlighted through the use of humour – most explicitly in the comedic failures of the heroes hunting the boar. Great heroes of legend, such as Telamon and Nestor, act and fail in the most ridiculous of ways – one tripping on a tree root, and the other using his spear to pole-vault out of danger into a tree. They are in this way presented as having feet of clay; as being fallible over the most trivial of issues. Such a presentation undercuts the essential heroic qualities of these characters, among others. Some hunters do not even try to be heroic – they are wounded by the boar whilst turning tail. Overall, this section is in fact a pointed catalogue of heroic failure.³³ As Horsfall (1979) notes, the ranks of the hunters are “filled with mighty names: Jason, Castor and Pollux, Peleus, Telamon, Nestor, Laertes, Amphiaraus. We expect achievements at least comparable with those of their progeny” (p.322) and yet it turns into a “chronicle of masculine incompetence” (p.327). “Ovid’s huntsmen are great heroes whose heroism and whose competence as hunters are regularly and ludicrously deficient” (p.330).³⁴

³³ By no means are all of the heroes mentioned by the narrator, and of those whose actions are noted, the highlighted failures other than those already mentioned include those of: Echion, who manages to give a light wound “*leve vulnus*” but only to a maple tree (8.345-6); Jason, who first misses through excessive manliness “*nimiis... viribus*” (8.347-9), and on his second attempt manages to successfully spear one of their own hunting-dogs (8.411-3); Enaësimus, who gets stabbed while running away (8.362-4); and Ancaeus (8.391-402, mentioned above). On this last example, Keith (1999) notes that this ironic fate is emphasised by the fact that Ancaeus’ weapon is feminine (p.227) and he is also from feminine Arcadia (n.54). See Hollis (1970) for a line by line discussion of all these aspects.

³⁴ Holzberg (2002) similarly sums up that “here... the heroes pursuing the beast are portrayed quite unheroically – are, indeed, made to look ridiculous” (p.131). Perhaps this is most significant in the case of Theseus’ stature as a traditional hero. Theseus, through whom Ovid introduces this story under the pretext of his having some significant involvement in it, here does nothing significant. He is wholly ineffective and keeps his distance, and is primarily concerned with Pirithous’ safety. Much can be said about this passage, but as an example, the unepic nature of this whole episode is represented by Theseus’ words to Pirithous “*licet eminus esse/ fortibus*” (8.406-7), which could be translated as “those at a distance can still be brave.” As Hollis (1970) notes on 8.406-7, this could be interpreted as “those whose courage is unquestioned do not need to justify themselves by rushing to close quarters” or, as Horsfall (1979) suggests, “we may be brave at a distance.” Alternately, Theseus’ point in these words is simply to excuse himself and Pirithous by comparison to Atalanta. She, using an arrow, was (according to Meleager, 8.387) virtuous and manly from afar and, therefore, if this is possible for a woman, such heroes as themselves can do as she did without fear of criticism. Indeed, if they feel the need to get in close to be manly, then they are in fact inferior in this respect to Atalanta. Whatever the case, it is a fact that the deliberately keeping out of the forefront of the fray is blatantly unheroic. Theseus’ statement that Ancaeus was rash in attempting to be brave or carry out what he considered a virtue at close quarters (8.407 – almost the opposite of the sentiment that such a hero would normally be expected to say) supports this, since the example is used by Theseus merely as a justification for not participating. See also Horsfall (1979), p.330. It is also interesting to note that if indeed Ovid hopes his reader will have Euripides’ version of this story in mind (as was the case with *Phaethon*), then it is also possible that Theseus’ words are designed to cause the reader to note his lack of traditional heroism by contrast to the statement found in Euripides’ *Meleager*: “Cowardly men are not counted in battle; being present they are absent nonetheless,” “*δειλοί γὰρ ἄνδρες οὐκ ἔχουσιν ἐν μάχῃ/ ἀριθμόν, ἀλλ’ ἄπεισι κἂν παρῶσ’ ὄμως*” (frag. 519).

The frequency and consistency of these humorous/mock-humorous techniques, as well as their thorough integration within the text, make it clear that making this quintessentially epic-style passage un-epic by cutting down the serious and the heroic, is deliberate on Ovid's part and not an unintentional flaw.³⁵ As Segal (1999) put it, "Ovid's account of the boar-hunt is detailed but deliberately anti-heroic," and "the battle scenes around Calydon, central to both Homer and Bacchylides, disappear almost entirely" (p.302). The unepic qualities of this explicitly epic section of the *Metamorphoses* are further emphasised in a number of ways,³⁶ including: the undercutting of "epic" by the language of "*amor*" in the Atalanta & Meleager and Atalanta & Ancaeus sections,³⁷ the humorous undercurrent in the depiction of the mourning over Meleager's death and his sisters' mourning,³⁸ and the un-epic involvement of the reader with words such as "*possis*" (8.323).³⁹

This portrayal of such quintessential heroes as comically fallible⁴⁰ is consistent with the indifference and lack of sympathy found in the portrayal of their sufferings, both here and

³⁵ It is therefore surprising that some see the failure to maintain the loftiness of the epic tone by introduction of humorous episodes (here, in the most epic of the *Metamorphoses*' stories, which has a number of blatant allusions to traditional epic – both in content and style of presentation), as a flaw in Ovid's ability. See for example Hollis (1970), p.77.

³⁶ Horsfall (1979) gives the broadest summary currently available.

³⁷ As Segal (1999) notes with regard to Meleager & Atalanta, the "erotic theme forms an anti-heroic foil to the catalogue of heroes immediately preceding" (p.302). Related to this is the role reversal of masculine and feminine, implied by the description of Atalanta's *virtus* (and initial description as appearing rather boyish in appearance, 8.322-3) and the heroes' blushing "*erubere*" (8.387-8). Similarly, Meleager dies a death of love – by internal flames. See Segal (1999) for more on these points.

³⁸ See Anderson (1972) who gives a thorough discussion of the humour and wit found in this passage. For example, he notes how "the paroxysms of grief on the part of Meleager's sisters becomes ludicrous, because they cannot meet the expectations set up by the epic device" which precedes them, forecasting the impossibility of relating the full extent of the sufferings which occurred at Meleager's death (see also Hollis, 1970, on 533-4 with regard to this "epic device").

³⁹ See Hollis (1970), on this line. There are in fact a number of humorous touches in the manner of this story's narration which serve to reinforce the comedy of this scene. For example, we see this in the description of the boar. As Anderson (1972) on "*sus erat*" in 8.272 notes, this is a "comically abrupt dactylic unit. Even though *aper* could not begin a hexameter because of its short *a*, nevertheless we should have expected a more dignified word for the boar this first time, if Ovid's intentions were serious." This creates an unbelievable impression when taken in conjunction with the use of "*vulnificus sus*" in 8.359 (which plays on the "*ridiculus mus*" of Hor. Ars. 139 – see Hill, 1992), and the overblown descriptions of the boar (such as having lightning coming from its mouth, 8.289).

⁴⁰ Also at the forefront of the other "epic" sections of the *Metamorphoses*, such as *The Battle of Centaurs and Lapiths* (12.210-535), and the story of *Perseus* (4.604-5.249). See Coleman (1971); Mack (1988), pp.121-7; Newlands (2005), pp.481-5; Keith (1999); Holzberg (2002), pp.2-3, 131, 141-2; and Otis (1970), particularly pp.350-1.

elsewhere in the poem. All is tied to the general tone of indifference to morality, which stems from the depiction of morality itself as impotent, whatever approach one takes to it.⁴¹

If characters' virtues and vices are shown as being unimportant – because all are ineffective and make destruction equally likely – there is no reason to encourage sympathy with the virtuous, denounce the vicious, promote adherence to a moral code, or specifically denounce those who do not chose to follow one. Moreover, if characters are flawed by their very metaphysical nature, or the morality that they hold, it is by definition unrealistic to present characters as wholly good, virtuous, heroic and both metaphysically and morally efficacious. We see this not only in the cases of the hunters in this story, but also in Meleager and Althaea who, for all their virtues, are nevertheless flawed. Praise for either the particularly good or virtuous in their characters is noticeably restrained. This is also consistent with the fact that we rarely see totally wicked characters depicted in the *Metamorphoses*, and that neither serious moral criticism is made or implied for immoral, rash or ineffective actions.⁴²

Furthermore, when characters are portrayed as being consistent in one way or another, the humorous touches of their presentations serve to dispel the reality of such impressions. We have already seen this in the character of Scylla who, while supposedly attempting to use reason to choose the correct course of action, wishes for the most ridiculous things in the process, thus poking fun at the believability of the existence of such a character.

Similarly, we see this in the character of Althaea, who has often been highlighted as a character portrayed in an unrealistic fashion.⁴³ For example, with regard to her analytical soliloquy, a common viewpoint is offered by Hollis (1970) (on 8.445-525) who, although seeming to praise the “tormented monologue” of Althaea, states that in this passage Ovid “lacks power and thence credibility; his smooth antitheses destroy all illusion of a woman in agony of soul torn between conflicting loyalties” – and attributes this to Ovid’s not being

⁴¹ It must here be clarified that the idea expressed by this is not “all ends in ruin.” This is clearly shown by the escape from misery and ruin of many of the characters – including many of the heroes who are later to become famous, not least Atalanta.

⁴² As Otis (1970) has commented, Ovid’s “understanding of evil is not very acute: his bad characters tend on the whole to be mere monsters like Lycaon, Erysichthon and Tereus” (p.341). See also Fränkel (1956), who notes “wicked types are rare and unconvincing, except when they can be viewed with humour” (p.100) – perhaps as the portrayal of true heroes and true villains would suggest that one’s virtues or vices mattered. As a whole, the *Metamorphoses* is predominantly free from wholly good or thoroughly bad characters – they nearly all have a mixture of qualities, although with a definite tilt one way or the other.

⁴³ Indeed, this forms part of a broader trend: Ovid has often been criticised for having characters who do not seem fully “real.” For example, see Crump (1931), p.23; Galinsky (1975), p.23; and Solodow (1988), p.132.

equal to the task of a tragedian. But if we keep the above observations in mind, again the evidence points to this being deliberate on Ovid's part – these facets are too consistent and too well-integrated to be accident. This too agrees with a determinist premise: if one's decisions, choices etc. are not determined by free will, there is, in principle, little point to portraying realistic characters.

Summary

As a whole, we can see that the philosophical ideas implicit within this story are very much similar to and completely consistent with those observed in the previous chapters. We see that the dichotomy between mind and body is found in all of the major characters in various ways. That such a dichotomy helps take the character, choices, actions, and fates of individual characters out of their hands, again suggests determinism, as does the presences of external forces such as the gods and Fates which are active in controlling the events of the story. Additionally, we see that emotion-based action, the upholding of personal values, and strong values in themselves, can and are likely to aid destruction, both for oneself and others. More fundamentally, we see the depiction of consciously held moral codes (the intrinsic and the mixed) as largely ineffective in their ability to aid characters to achieve long term success, happiness, or positive fates, and can even work against these. Despite this, the intrinsic approach to morality and its associated morals and values are still given a far more explicitly positive presentation than those of the mixed approach. Finally, we see the consistent depiction of heroes as flawed, implicitly undercutting the ideas of efficacy with which they are traditionally associated.

Chapter 5 – Pyramus & Thisbe

This story stands apart from those we have seen so far in that it focuses on two characters whose conflict is undesired, unintentional and, to some extent, unknown. The story is again told by an internal narrator and is solely concerned with mortals, the ramifications of whose actions directly affect only themselves. The story ends in total tragedy.

The story of *Pyramus & Thisbe*, known so widely through Shakespeare's treatment,¹ is the only story treated at length in the *Metamorphoses* in which all of the main characters are portrayed as good and without vice and whose fates are solely self-determined. Their fates do not result from conflicts with others or deliberate intervention by outside agencies. It is due to these factors that this story offers a new angle on the philosophical outlook inherent within the poem.

However, as with *Scylla*, this new angle predominantly sheds light on very much the same aspects of the work as have the stories covered in earlier chapters. In this story, we see the themes of both emotion and personal value being likely to encourage negative fates. We also see the presence of a dichotomy between reason and emotion, each pulling in different directions and irreconcilable with the other. This dichotomy is presented as aiding even the virtuous in coming to a negative fate. Characters' strong values are once again presented as being key to their fates, and both strong values and emotion are linked with self-interest. The ideas of both determinism and the impotence of virtue are implied through these fates being outside the characters' control, ideas which are also emphasised by *chance* featuring as significant in bringing the characters to their fates. Also noticeable is a theme already discussed in *Meleager* – that even characters explicitly depicted as virtuous are inherently flawed, and their very virtues are likely to aid their destruction.

¹ A *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act 5.

1. Introduction

Pyramus and Thisbe are two young lovers whose love has grown over time. Their parents obstruct their union so they decide to flee together in the dead of night, meeting at a place far from their homes. Thisbe arrives first and flees a lioness, after which Pyramus arrives and, seeing the blood-bespattered shawl that Thisbe had dropped in her flight and which has since been mauled by the lioness' bloody jaws, assumes that his beloved is dead. Pyramus, distraught with grief, believes that he is to blame and consequently wishes to die. He commits suicide just before Thisbe returns. She, understanding why her lover has died, decides also to kill herself as proof of her equal love and to be with him in death, as she can no longer be in life. Before doing so, she prays that they be entombed together and that the fruit of the overhanging mulberry tree, stained red with Pyramus' blood, retain this colour as a memory to their twin deaths. She kills herself and her wishes are fulfilled by their parents and unnamed gods.

Although this story is related by an internal narrator, it is not told for the purpose of presenting a particular moral or philosophical standpoint (as was that of *Ceres*), but it does reflect the context in which it is told. The narrator is one of the daughters of Minyas who, being dedicated to Minerva (4.38), narrate tales to each other while everyone else is attending the festival of Dionysus. The chaste kind of love present in the characters of Pyramus and Thisbe, reflects the sisters' disdain for emotional excesses such as those associated with Dionysiac festivals. Nevertheless, the lovers still lose one another as a result of Pyramus' emotion-driven assumption, and this, combined with the fact that both Dionysiac and erotic subtexts exist throughout the story, implies the impotence of the Minyeides to fully reject either the influence of Dionysus or Venus (to whom the followers of Minerva are opposed).¹

¹ For the presence of Dionysian influence, see Keith (2002), who discusses how "Verbal details evocative of the rites of Bacchic worship and the larger themes of Dionysiac myth repeatedly intrude into the tale and suggest the god's diffuse penetration of the Minyeides' household long before the decisive revelation of his godhead" (p.262), and goes on to list a number of examples, such as the lion, the suicide of a lead character – all reminiscent of tragedy, of which Dionysus is the patron deity (see pp.258-62). See also Curley (1999), pp.217-20, and (2009), p.6, as well as Anderson (1997), p.417.

With regard to the influence of Venus, it is significant that although the Minyeides are chaste maidens (devoted to the chaste, reason-inspiring Minerva), they tell tales of love (the others are about *Venus & Vulcan*, and *Daphnis & Salmacis*, who together turn into Hermaphroditus). Thus, like their spurning of Dionysus, so their spurning of Venus – love – is useless, as they all tell tales about her and her power. On this topic, see Glenn (1986), pp.44-5. On the implicit eroticism and sexual symbolism, see Anderson (1997) on 4.86-90; Segal (1969a), pp.50-1; and Glenn (1986): "They would meet at night in the country by a tomb, under a tall (phallic) tree that is most fruitful (*'uberrima'*). The word for 'most fruitful' also suggests the Latin word for 'breasts.' This tree with white berries (female symbol, possibly male in conjunction with the phallic tree) – mulberries

This allows us to approach this story without having to be concerned whether or not the philosophical outlook inherent within it is only reflective of that of the Minyeides, or of the *Metamorphoses* more broadly. That the latter is the case is confirmed by the fact that the themes and philosophical implications found within this story are consistent with those found in the stories we have already discussed, and throughout the poem.

Most of the main details of this story (of its plot, the setting of the action, and the characterisations) are unattested prior to Ovid's treatment as being connected with any figures called Pyramus and Thisbe (see below). This is significant as it suggests that these main details, and how they are integrated into the story, are particularly likely to have been included for a specific purpose (be it the depiction of characters, plot, or theme) – as opposed to being merely baggage inherited from previous versions of the myth.

That this treatment is original and purposely designed in contrast to previous versions of the myths surrounding these two figures, is subtly emphasised by a number of literary allusions to these previous versions.

For example, Ovid alludes to the association of the name Pyramus with a river,² and Thisbe a spring³ (both of which are often personified and mentioned together),⁴ and the metamorphoses associated with these figures,⁵ in several ways: Thisbe and Pyramus meet by a spring, behind which is a cave into which Thisbe flees and then returns, and it is said of Thisbe that she trembled like water that quivers when a gentle breeze skims its surface (4.134-6).⁶ Furthermore, Pyramus' death scene, in which his blood is said to spurt out "emicat" (4.121) in long streams of water "*longas... aquas*" (4.123-4), is not too far removed from Pyramus' transformation into a stream, only in this case, a stream of blood.⁷ Finally, the

are terribly sweet – is near a cool spring, just the thing for hot and thirsty people, and a tomb (female symbol)" (p.48). Further examples such as these can be found by the dozen.

² In Cilicia: Non. *Dion.* 6.344-55, 12.84-5; Him. *Orat.* 1.11 (151c-d); Aphth. *Progym.* (Rhet. Gr. 1.271, No.9 Walz); Xen. *Anab.* 1.4.1; Stra. 1.3.7-8; Arr. *An.* 2.5.8; Lyc. 439; Plin. *N.H.* 5.22.91, 3.7.5; pseudo-Clement. *Recog.* 10.26. See Knox (2006), for a comprehensive summary of both the Greek and Roman literary references to the myth.

³ In Boeotia: Hom. *Il.* 2.502. Pausanias 9.32.2-3 states that Thisbe was a city in Boeotia which took its name from a local nymph.

⁴ For example, Non. *Dion.* 6.344-55, 12.84-5; and Him. *Orat.* 1.11 (151c-d).

⁵ Various versions of this story tell of a double metamorphosis of the lovers and some, that of Thisbe alone – this is also linked to the references to Pyramus as a river-god. These include: Pseudo-Clement. *Recog.* 10.26; Him. *Orat.* 1.11 (151c-d); and Nicolaus of Myra (now ascribed to Aphthonius) *Progym.* (Rhet. Gr. 1.271 Nr.9 Walz). See also Knox (2006), who comments on the Paphian mosaic, which shows evidence of such traditions.

⁶ Knox (2006) also notes the allusions in these cases to the tradition of Thisbe as a spring.

⁷ See Shorrock (2003).

fact that he is also lying supine “*iacuit resupinus humo*” (4.121) conjures up his portrayal as a river-god on both extant coins and mosaics.⁸

The lack of association of the *Metamorphoses*’ version of the tale with its predecessors is further emphasised by several subtle flags to another myth (that of *Ninus & Semiramis*) with which it is associated, and serves to highlight important thematic points of this story thereby. This is discussed in 5. *Theme*.

2. Conflict

The main conflict of the *Thisbe & Pyramus* tale is as simple as any so far discussed. It is a straight-forward two-person conflict between the title characters, whose relationship as lovers is stated explicitly, and who both clearly hold their mutual love as their highest value.

In this conflict, Pyramus is the protagonist. The story progresses as it does on account of the decisions he makes while pursuing his values, and it is his suicide that constitutes the ruling issue of conflict and is the event that leads to the story’s final outcome. Although Pyramus and Thisbe are lovers, and the two are implicitly in conflict through his suicide (which takes away her chance of gaining her highest values), it would be more accurate to describe Thisbe as a deuteragonist than an antagonist. Thisbe does not have an active role in the main conflict and can only react to Pyramus’ actions. Her role is that of one who loves Pyramus, decides to meet up with him outside their city, and flees a lioness in self-preservation. It is Pyramus’ action that opposes their love.

Thus an accurate statement of the central conflict would be Pyramus v. Pyramus *and* Thisbe. The value at stake is their mutual love (concretised in the form of Pyramus’ life); it is over this that they implicitly come into conflict, and it is the result of this conflict that leads to the story’s final outcome.⁹

⁸ See Knox (2006), p.331, who makes note of the numismatic evidence that Pyramus was known as a river god and portrayed as such as early as the 1st century B.C.

⁹ Note that the central conflict is not Pyramus and Thisbe v. their parents, or v. the lioness. While there is a conflict with their parents, it is only the inciting incident which brings the main characters to the central conflict, on which the parents’ opposition has no bearing. Likewise, the lioness, although a presence, is in conflict with nobody except the cattle, and just happens to be the catalyst whose presence triggered Pyramus’ thought process and thus action.

3. Plot-Development

Backstory and establishment of the situation

The narrator, an unnamed daughter of Minyas, provides the first details about Thisbe and Pyramus and gives a summary of the backstory and establishment of the situation. In introducing the characters (4.55ff), she relates the context of the relationship between them, how they came to know each other, and gives examples of the actions which demonstrate their love for one another and the nature of that love. In short we find out that they are young persons who have fallen in love slowly over time; that they have been separated physically by their parents; and that they have still contrived to communicate and, in consequence, decided to elope together.

The lovers' actions in response to the physical restrictions their parents place upon them (4.61), and their behaviour in the wall scene (4.65ff), are important specifically because both suggest their values (which are the same – their love of one another and desire to be together) and give an initial demonstration of the authenticity of their feelings. This situation leads to the lovers' plan to achieve their joint values by leaving their city and parents in the dead of night and meeting outside it at the tomb of one Ninus.¹⁰ Although by this point we have been given the backstory and introduced to the main characters and their values, there is still an aspect of the establishment still to come – the issue over which or the means by which these two lovers come into conflict. This only occurs after Thisbe has fled the lioness.

Build-up

After planning their escape and waiting for a suitably parent-free evening, the lovers each slip out of their respective homes to meet at their designated point of rendezvous. This action, and those which lead up to Pyramus' suicide, further concretises both characters' values.

Like many of Ovid's stories, this one is not truly established until just before the climax. The build-up is here primarily in establishment – in getting the characters to the main conflict. Although as Anderson (1997) observes, in the lead-up to the climax, the lovers "face a

¹⁰ The husband of Semiramis, said in Dio. Sic. 2.7.1 to be located near Babylon. The significance of this particular tomb is discussed below.

number of symbolic obstacles to their happiness” (p.417), these are incidental to the main conflict, and are really only tools by which their characters and the situation in which they find themselves are depicted. The only genuine build-up in intensity is when the lioness comes on the scene and Thisbe flees it. This, when Pyramus arrives, leads to his assumption that Thisbe is dead and his decision to commit suicide, from which the act itself follows.

The period between Pyramus first catching sight of the bloody cloak and his suicide constitutes the climax. This is where he chooses once and for all what course of action he will take, and the action that follows leaves only one logical type of ending to the story (given the characterisations which have been presented) – a profoundly tragic one.¹¹ Here Pyramus openly states his motives: his desire to be united with Thisbe (even if only in death), and his view that death is what he deserves for bringing about the death of his beloved (or so he thinks).

Resolution

The remainder of the story constitutes the aftermath. Thisbe returns and, seeing the dying Pyramus, understands the circumstances of his death and reacts (in accordance with the values that are still left to her) by choosing to kill herself and be united with her beloved in death. Here we see proof of the depth of Thisbe’s love. Thisbe prays to both sets of parents that she and Pyramus may be interred together and to the nearby mulberry tree that its mulberries may remain red as a memorial to their fates. She then stabs herself with Pyramus’ sword, and is joined with him in death. All of her prayers are answered (by her parents and unnamed gods): the fruit of the mulberry tree retains its bloody colour, and Thisbe is further joined physically with Pyramus through the combination of their ashes. Thus ends the story of two virtuous but tragic lovers.

¹¹ The climax does not extend to Thisbe’s suicide on account of the fact that she is a passive character who can only react to the situation. The final decision lies with Pyramus (as to be expected, since he is the antagonist to his own values). Since it is on his decision which the achievement of both characters’ values hangs, it is after his final action that the outcome can be predicted with certainty. Thus Pyramus also represents Thisbe’s values and desires – in taking away the possibility of their fulfilment through his death – and there is no need to wait to find out Thisbe’s character by her reaction to demarcate the end of the climax.

4. Characterisation

When Pyramus and Thisbe are first introduced, apart from the initial statement that “one was the most well-formed youth, the other, the most distinguished girl that the orient possessed,” “*iuvenum pulcherrimus alter,/ altera, quas Oriens habuit, praelata puellis*” (4.55-6), the information given about each of them is the same, as if they were carbon copies of each other. We are told by the internal narrator that their love grew over time (4.60) and that their love was strong and mutual (4.62);¹² even though their parents were against their love (4.61) they both secretly spoke with nods and signs (4.63) and communicated through a chink in their garden wall. They also mutually concoct a plan to flee their parents and city together. Aside from the above, their paths are divided, and we will deal with Pyramus first.

From the above information, we can tell that Pyramus is enamoured with Thisbe and that this love is a deep affection, based on more than instantaneous passion. This is shown by the fact that this love developed over time and has stood the test of conversation to such an extent that Pyramus is keen to desert both city and parents to flee with Thisbe.¹³ However, the comedy of the wall scene (in which, among other things, the lovers act childishly in addressing the wall and giving to it prayers and blame for its harshness)¹⁴ suggests that this love is still very much linked with emotion. That this is the case is suggested by the immediately preceding words “what does love not perceive,” “*quid non sensit amor*” (4.68), which are markedly ironic, given that we find out through the events of the story that there is much to which the lovers are in fact blind, not least the dangers surrounding them.¹⁵

¹² Also, as Anderson (1997) notes on “*ex aequo*” in 4.62, “Ovid is not describing the standard comic or elegiac situation, where a male of the upper classes has fallen in love with a girl of no social pretensions, whether a pauper or a courtesan. Thisbe is as good as Pyramus... They are equal in merit and in love. This entire line, with its slow spondaic rhythm, emphasises the perfect match of their feelings.” Note the scansion of this line; it is almost entirely “even” being comprised of 5 spondees and only the one customary dactyl in the 5th foot.

¹³ Note that “*amor*” is in this story treated in a high, epic, Vergilian style, not as associated with lowly, animal, base passions. Their love is based on something more than emotion. It is not just a bodily lust, but is based on deeper values; “*captis... mentibus ambo*” (4.62) is evidence for this. Elegiac amatory history is here rejected in a number of ways – these are very much atypical lovers. They fall in love over a long period of time; there is no elegiac refusal; they both want each other equally, but not merely in a physical sense (although this is symbolised in several ways, most obviously in the mixing of blood and tears after Pyramus’ death, and Thisbe’s suggestion to the wall that the lovers may join in body “*corpore iungi*” 4.74); nor are there doorkeepers, other admirers, or girl’s parents to be outwitted (the parents in this situation are not much of an obstacle – the lovers communicate easily with signs, they contrive to talk together regularly, and they both make it out of the city without incident or alarm being raised); and they wanted to marry – not just carry on an illicit relationship.

¹⁴ See Perraud (1983-4), pp.135-9.

¹⁵ For example, they see nothing inherently dangerous or sinister in the fact that they have decided to meet up alone (without any further planning), away from their homes and city, out in the countryside, at night, near a

When Pyramus arrives at their meeting place, both his actions and the speed with which he decides upon them confirm that he is influenced by emotion. Upon arrival he sees the footprints, the bloody veil, precipitately assumes that Thisbe is dead, and instantly decides on suicide without considering such things as Thisbe's footprints (or lack thereof), the fact that there are no physical remains,¹⁶ the fact that there is only one article of clothing and with minimal blood upon it,¹⁷ and that he would have had to arrive an extremely long time after the event for her to have been completely devoured.¹⁸ It is the emotions associated with his love for Thisbe that here befuddle his reason. He not only assumes the worst, but fails even to check the facts or consider the possibility that what he sees might be something other than what he first assumed.

Also with regard to Pyramus' motivations for his actions, we learn from his own mouth that he is truly convinced (obviously unjustly and irrationally) not only of his responsibility for Thisbe's death, but of his guilt.¹⁹ That she is alive proves the unjustness of these sentiments.²⁰ It is never suggested that Pyramus believes he did wrong in loving her, only that he was responsible for her death. This is his primary motive for wanting to die, although it is of course implicit that he also wishes this on account of the fact that he loves her more than life itself and has therefore no incentive to live on after her death. There is both courage and dedication in this action. In his final words "but to (merely) wish death is for the timid" "*sed*

watering hole in an area where lionesses roam, at the tomb of one whose life was supposedly surrounded by suicide (see discussion on *Ninus & Semiramis* in 5. Theme). Segal (1969a) observes the various danger & death motifs given here, summing up that "the landscape which they encounter contains the same clustering of motifs as the tales of open violence" (p.50). To this we can add that the authorial decision to have the lovers meet and die by a tomb (and particularly that of Ninus) very much suggests the Tertullian sentiment of "Look behind you! Remember you are human!" "*Respice post te! Hominem te memento!*" (*Apolog.* 33.4), and implies the fallibility of the lovers.

¹⁶ Unlike what one would expect with lions – thus showing Pyramus' ignorance of the world.

¹⁷ Not a lot, since the lion had previously drunk deeply at the spring ("*multa conpescuit unda*" 4.102). See Anderson (1997) on this passage.

¹⁸ The speed with which Pyramus makes the assumption that Thisbe is dead after his arrival is comparable to the similar narration to Dis' abduction of Proserpina. In Dis' case, the perception of Proserpina, followed by the decision and the action are all related within a single line to convey the acute nature of the emotion that overcomes him (5.395). In Pyramus' case, it takes only three more: "having come out too late Pyramus sees in the deep dust the footprints doubtless of a lioness and his whole face turns pale; and as in truth he also discerned the veil tintured with blood, 'one night' he said 'will kill two lovers'" "*serius egressus vestigia vidit in alto/ pulvere certa ferae totoque expalluit ore/ Pyramus; ut vero vestem quoque sanguine tinctam/ repperit, 'una duos' inquit 'nox perdet amantes'*" (4.105-8). Note that uniquely in this story, lines 4.108-9 both have the scansion pattern of 2 dactyls, 2 spondees, 1 dactyl, 1 spondee. This is an obvious reflection of the similarities, compatibility, and togetherness in life and death of Pyramus and Thisbe. The same pattern occurs at 4.71.

¹⁹ Anderson (1997), on 108-12, notes that Ovid here uses "our mind/heart is the harming one" "*nostra nocens anima est*" and "wicked" "*scelerata viscera*" to emphasise that it is guilt that Pyramus feels.

²⁰ Note that Pyramus' self-blame comes before his explanation of what he is blaming himself for. This delay of explanation makes the illogical self-blame all the more striking.

timidi est optare necem" (4.115) and actions, Pyramus' dedication is depicted,²¹ and he shows himself as courageous in willing to face the unknown horrors of death.²²

Thus we have Pyramus. His value of Thisbe explains his decision to commit suicide and is, ironically, the factor which prevents either of the lovers ever achieving their values. Pyramus opposes his and Thisbe's values under the mistaken impression that he was adhering to them – he erred because his love blinded him to reason. Pyramus' character fits into the category of those who have a "mixed" approach to morality. Although it is clear from his speeches that he is not a stranger to conscious thought and reasoning – he thinks about what he does, and does not act purely on emotion – his choice and motive for suicide is still influenced by his emotion. However, it does not stem from morals or duties depicted as intrinsic. Rather, he seems to judge himself by independently determined standards, stemming from his emotions arising from the loss of Thisbe.

Now let us consider Thisbe. Until her departure from the city, her character is depicted as very much the equal of Pyramus'.²³ However, Thisbe's arrival at their meeting place ahead of him is the first of numerous instances where her actions (and thus to an extent character) are subtly compared and contrasted with those of Pyramus. Here, her prior arrival hints that she may be either keener than Pyramus to flee together, or that she is in fact the braver of the two "love made her audacious" "*audacem faciebat amor*" (4.96).²⁴ Also, the speed with which she recovers from the first emotional anguish of seeing Pyramus dead, together with the fact that she almost instantaneously resolves upon death herself, shows her strength of mind.

²¹ Although it is hinted by the words "love made her audacious" "*audacem faciebat amor*" (4.96) that such audacity is a standard result of love (compare 10.586). This is also similar to Scylla's statement at "indeed to wish is not enough" "*verum velle parum est!*" (8.69) and again "Fortune resists against idle prayers" "*ignavis precibus Fortuna repugnat*" (8.73).

²² Although the realm of Tartarus has been given the occasional mention (e.g. 1.113, 2.260), no existence after death has yet been presented in the *Metamorphoses*.

²³ From the first lines of the story, through to the end of the establishment (when Thisbe flees the lioness), both Pyramus and Thisbe are introduced together and the same elements of characterisation are used for them, as if they were identical. In fact, apart from name and gender, there is nothing to differentiate them.

²⁴ This contrast is further suggested by the length of time which must have passed before Pyramus arrives – the lioness (who Thisbe saw a long way off, 4.99) has arrived, drunk much, found Thisbe's garment and torn it to shreds and departed. The narrator also emphasises Pyramus' lateness by putting the word Pyramus too late in the clause (4.107), which is true in relation to when he should have arrived, but not in the sense that he is too late to meet Thisbe had he not lost complete control of his reason (see Keith, 2001, pp.309-12 for the links between *amor*, *mora* and *morte*). Her bravery is apparent in her return – even though she knows that there very possibly a lion at hand. Anderson (1997) notes that this action further reflects on the quality of their love: "we focus on her struggle to meet her beloved in spite of her substantial fears. She does not think of herself or even let timidity rule her actions: human love is mutual commitment, concern for the other along with oneself. It puts divine love to shame in Ovid's poem. *oculis animoque* 129: the double-noun phrase suggests the nature of human love as more than merely physical" (p.426).

Another detail that suggests that the feminine Thisbe is equal to or greater than Pyramus in love and courage is that she kills herself for a positive motive – in pursuit of her values – to be with Pyramus (4.151-3), something notably absent from Pyramus' stated motives for his own death.²⁵ Furthermore, her stated reasons for her actions are much clearer and more sensible than those of Pyramus. As we will see, this ties in with the story being emotionally focussed on Thisbe and her more sympathetic portrayal.

When Thisbe sees Pyramus dead, she acts in a manner typical of a grieving woman in ancient literature.²⁶ She beats her arms and tears her hair. However, on seeing her garment and realising that the sword that killed him was his and therefore his own hand that committed the deed, she decides to kill herself and join her lover in death (4.151-3).²⁷ As we saw with Pyramus, this implies the nature and quality of their "love" as virtuous – i.e. that it is right, justified, proper, based on a long-term relationship, and not merely based on emotion.²⁸ However, even though Thisbe too gives over to grief/emotion briefly when she initially sees Pyramus – rending her hair and asking him questions – she does not decide upon her course of action in an obvious fit of irrationality, as does Pyramus. Then, also unlike Pyramus, she remembers their parents and although not criticising them, asks them to in effect be good to the lovers' remains and prays that the tree nearby change the colour of its berries in

²⁵ Also noteworthy is the fact that Thisbe commits suicides (a brave and manly thing to do), and that to do so she not only uses a sword (rather than the feminine noose), but she puts the point of his sword to her chest and falls on it. This is a typically heroic and masculine way of committing suicide (see Loraux, 1991, and Garrison, 2000). In contrast, Pyramus merely stabs himself in the side/stomach "*ilia*" (4.119) (a word which can also be taken as "groin" and thus symbolic both this action making a sexual union with Thisbe now impossible, as well as his emasculation in comparison with her). This is unwomanly, and the epic/tragic (as opposed to elegiac) action ties in nicely with the epic-style portrayal of love already mentioned. It is by no means accidental that such a tragic device is found in this story, which is heavily influenced by Dionysus, the god of tragedy, and is told in context of a story being told by one supposedly spurning the god, although not successfully. The emasculation of Pyramus and the masculinisation of Thisbe are apt here. As Keith (1999) notes, all of the Minyades' tales deal with gender inversion or blurring and that they are presided over by the gods of gender blurring, Dionysus (p.220).

²⁶ Being here overcome by the emotion of grief, she is depicted as returning to her natural womanly state (see Anderson, 1997, on 4.139-41) and does not resume her manly aspect until she understands the situation and also decides to die.

²⁷ "I will follow in death" "*persequar extinctum*" (4.151) she says.

²⁸ Fratantuono (2011), has observed that "The first Minyad story is eminently Roman: noble suicide, honourable burial, permanent memorial" (p.94). That the kind of love Thisbe feels for Pyramus is to be seen as virtuous is further suggested by the fact that, unlike Scylla (see *Scylla*, 5. *Theme*), these feelings are not contrasted with others (such as higher duties). There is no alternative suggested, both characters are shown in their best and purest possible light, and their love is (as observed above) not entirely self-centred. Pyramus' statement that Thisbe was more worthy of life than he (4.109), is further evidence for this, as is his self-depreciation as deserving of death for allowing her to die (4.109-14), and the fact that, when he lies dying and Thisbe speaks to him, calling him by *his* name, he does not react to this but opens his eyes only at the sound of *her* name (4.145-6). For a different perspective, compare these actions and their motivations to those suggested in the discussion on friendship in Arist. *Nic. Eth.* 8 (particularly 1155a-56b).

remembrance. In all this, Thisbe too is portrayed as virtuous. She shows that she is strong-willed, decisive, brave, courageous, loyal, kind; she does not criticise her parents/the gods or anyone else, including Pyramus, in her final moments as one less resolute might do;²⁹ and she is willing to die on account of her love for him.

Thisbe acts as she does because of her love for Pyramus and, to her, killing herself is her way of attaining union with him, her highest value. However, in contrast to Pyramus, excessive emotion is not shown as blinding her to the point of irrational action. She is, however, aware of her feelings and consciously chooses to act upon them. Thus she is also a character who has a “mixed” approach to morality.

Evaluation of characters

The portrayal of Pyramus is explicitly a positive one. The narrator presents him as a predominantly virtuous character – as defined by what is and has been depicted as intrinsically moral, just, right in word, action, thought, principle, and value throughout the poem. He is both brave in the circumstances of his death, and his virtue is most profoundly depicted through the quality of his love for Thisbe. That is, it is neither entirely selfish nor based on emotion alone. This is particularly noticeable in the dedication he shows to her through his death – an apparently self-sacrificial action committed in the name of this love.³⁰ His qualities are evaluated positively by Thisbe,³¹ and implicitly by the gods in their heeding of Thisbe’s prayers. Furthermore, although Pyramus is implicitly treated somewhat mockingly in the wall scene and by the foolhardy actions that stem from his love, he is never criticised openly by the internal narrator, and his foolishness is not portrayed as a significant

²⁹ Compare, for example, Orpheus’ words of reproach to the gods at 10.76-7. See also *Phaethon*, n.40.

³⁰ This is in marked contrast to the love depicted in the stories of the gods in earlier Books. As Anderson (1997) observes: “Pyramus and Thisbe, unlike Bacchus and to the gods, are not self-centred and amoral: they kill themselves for love, to join the beloved in death, if not in life. Their being is nothing without the other; what they seek is not selfish pleasure of humble worship from another, but permanent union of soul and body” (p.417). As a corollary, this ties in with the oft-mentioned fact that this is very much a godless tale; there is no explicitly divine presence in this story, and the transformation at the end is effected by unnamed gods. See Fratanuono (2011), p.92, and Anderson (1997), p.411.

³¹ She believes he acted properly and virtuously and sees no fault in his actions. The two uses of “et” in her statement “there is in me too a hand brave for this one thing, in me too there is love” “*est et mihi fortis in unum/ hoc manus, est et amor*” 4.149-50, reflect this, as does the fact that she calls him unlucky “*infelix*” (4.149) – rather than stupid – and her statement that it was his hand and love “*amorque*” (4.148), that killed him. This is said at a dramatic climax in the passion of the moment, it is not pre-planned and should therefore be taken as much as possible as being an accurate reflection of Thisbe’s subconscious.

fault.³² Once again this is understandable given what we have already seen regarding the presentation of those under the influence of emotion – since they are not responsible for them, there is no point in criticising them too much.

However, for all this, the fact that he comes to his death through his foolishness – a direct result of the emotions related to his love for Thisbe – combined with the somewhat comic and unbelievable situation of Pyramus' irrationality, implicitly undercuts his character. Although pure and idealistic, he is shown as fallible and at the mercy of his emotion. As a whole, this diminishes the sympathy potentially elicited for his tragic demise, despite his apparent virtue. The same undercutting is effected even more noticeably by the spoiling of pathos in the scene by the grotesque simile of the burst pipe – clearly deliberate on Ovid's part, but not so on that of the internal narrator.³³ As with the story the Muses tell to Minerva, the internal narrator is here unwittingly aware of certain implicit aspects of her tale.

Thisbe's portrayal is more consistently positive. Her actions are implied to be totally logical and virtuous given her situation, and there is a much clearer suggestion on the narrator's part that the reader should feel saddened at her demise. Further on this score is the fact that Thisbe also dies willingly for her love – a sacrificial action which, as already observed, is a virtue in accordance with what is presented as intrinsically moral throughout the *Metamorphoses*. In contrast to Pyramus, there is no significant weakness in Thisbe's character, and far less of a mocking tone implying foolishness for her love, even though this, in combination with her excessive value and the destructive emotions of another, leads to her death. Nor is there comedy in the depiction of her motivations or the circumstances and manner of her death; both are treated with much greater seriousness than those of Pyramus.

³² In contrast, Shakespeare makes a point of his foolishness in the version he includes in his "*A Midsummer Night's Dream*" in which the character Hippolyta hopes that Thisbe's passion should not be "a long one for such a Pyramus." I.e. she should not love him so much if he as stupid as he is. See Hughes (1997), p.ix, and Rudd (2000) on Ovid and Shakespeare in light of the comparison of versions

³³ On this details, Newlands (1986) notes that "readers have commonly seen the plumbing simile as unforgivable bathos at the dying Pyramus' expense" (p.431); Albrecht (1999) takes it as being an instance "in which the reader's illusion is dispelled in a rude awakening" (p.174); Galinsky (1975) states that this episode is "detrimental to achieving any pathos or dignity that would befit the occasion" and that this "epitomizes... [Ovid's] indifference to physical suffering" (p.128); and Due (1974) argues that the whole burst pipe simile is superfluous to the theme of transformation, as the roots of the mulberry have already absorbed Pyramus' blood and thus changed the berries (4.126-7) (see p.186, note 21). This out of place depiction shows the Minyaeides up as bad story-tellers, who are also naïve just like the lovers they depict, and undercuts the gravity of the situation by taking the focus off the tragic and pathetic actions which are occurring (see Anderson 1997, on this passage). See also Bömer (1969-86) on this passage, and Shorrock (2003), whose discussion on this passage is perhaps the most thorough of all. The philosophical significance of the latter point is discussed below.

As a whole, despite the seemingly explicit positive evaluation of both characters, there is still a certain detachment in their respective presentations. As neither character is explicitly criticised, so neither is explicitly praised, and for all their qualities, they have tragic fates. Also, the grotesquerie in Pyramus' death scene draws pathos away from the tragic event, and does far less to encourage pity at their respective fates than would otherwise have been the case. Moreover, although their love is in many ways atypical, there is so much stereotyping within the story as to make it unreal, and prevent at least some readers from being able either relate to the characters or feel interested in their fates. For instance, consider the comments of Anderson (1997), who states that "We pity them, but we do not feel compelled by the narrative to identify with them or their rather unrealistic love" (p.417).³⁴ This is completely understandable, given the difference between their explicit presentation as innocent, good, idealistic young lovers who die in vain, and the implicit undercutting of them by means of their failures, blindness. This is consistent with what we observed with regard to the heroes in the Calydonian boar hunt – supposedly exemplars of virtue in one respect or another, but undercut by the ruin they bring upon themselves, and the comedic presentation of their flaws.

5. Theme

The statement of the essence of this story's action situation is as follows: *one of two virtuous young lovers, precipitately assuming that his sweetheart is dead and that he is to blame, commits suicide*. As has already been observed, Pyramus is both the key protagonist and antagonist of this story, and the driving conflict is Pyramus v. both Thisbe and himself. The key event of this story is Pyramus' death by his own hand. This results in tragedy for all involved. Both characters lose their greatest value – their beloved – and do so unnecessarily. The key factors that facilitate Pyramus' actions are his emotion-based action (which leads him to assume falsely that Thisbe is dead), the strength of his passions (which prompt him to go to the extreme of committing suicide upon the apparent loss of his beloved) which,

³⁴ Anderson (1997), on 4.59-62, continues "*notitiam... vicinia*: the narrator uses abstract nouns to account for that typical romantic situation of girl meeting boy. As a result, their portrayal involves little realism, and their love seems stereotyped at the start... *vetuere patres* 61: another stereotypical situation, which the narrator passes over: paternal opposition to young love. We hurry on with the speaker, but we miss dramatic detail such as audiences get in *Romeo and Juliet*, and so cannot feel much for these two lovers." Similarly, Wilkinson (1955) comments "it is a pure romance of incident: the feelings of the lovers are as simple as they are strong, and they are taken for granted" (p.204) and has little real tragic depth as a consequence.

combined with his belief in both his responsibility and guilt for Thisbe's death, make such an action logical.

Pyramus himself is the active destroyer of his values and it is the above traits that are crucial to his key decisions and the motivations behind his actions. Consequently, it is from these that the story's explicit themes stem.

The significance of Pyramus' loss of reason lies in the fact that this is not shown to be a natural aspect of his character, but rather to be a direct result of the fact that he was in love. The emotions associated with this love blind Pyramus' reason and cause him to overlook the lack of evidence to validate of his assumptions, and so conclude that Thisbe is dead and that he is to blame. The tragic consequences once again bring forth the theme of emotion (specifically that associated with personal values) as being linked with destruction, because it points one away from reason and reality.

This leads to a further explicit theme, that excess value (here in the form of passion for a personal value) brings destruction. Had Pyramus not been so deeply in love with Thisbe, he would not have grieved – at the seeming loss of his personal value – to the extent that he made himself incapable of considering the facts and circumstances before him. Nor, having reached the conclusion that Thisbe was dead and that he was responsible, would he have gone to the extreme of suicide. Here, the depth and sincerity of Pyramus' affection is not only shown to be ineffectual in bringing himself and his beloved to a positive fate, but actually causes the opposite.

This second theme is reinforced in Thisbe's case. As with Pyramus, had she not loved her beloved to the extent that she did, she would have grieved less at his death and been far less likely to commit suicide as a means of joining him. She is passionately in love with him, and consequently decides to follow her beloved into death; an act which she explains stems from their love, and will prove her worthy of his love, which he for his own part has just proved through his own death.

Note that both of these themes are portrayed in this story as centring on personal, self-centred values. Broadly speaking, the implication is that these characters' fates are tragic because they are too concerned with personal matters. Thus another part of this story's abstract meaning is, as Glenn (1986) observes, that "love itself is self-destructive" (p.44). Hence the

strength and sincerity of their love and dedication is presented as a key obstacle to their success.

As stated in *1. Introduction*, the thematic importance of the suicide of the young lovers is emphasised by the allusions to the plot, characters, and fates found in the mythology surrounding the quasi-historical figures of Ninus and Semiramis, which I will take a little time to discuss, since it has not yet to my knowledge received attention.³⁵

Probably the most extensive version of the *Ninus & Semiramis* story, the *Ninus Romance*,³⁶ which from the fragments we have, seems to have been about a young couple who wanted to marry but were kept apart (temporarily) by their parents. However, they later reunite, but are again separated at some point. While we have no knowledge of how often Ovid referenced this particular version of the myth (given the few small fragments of that romance which remain), we do see a number of clear references to the Semiramis mythology, beginning with the information that these events begin in Semiramis' city (4.58). More significantly, allusions are made to this background through the introduction of the tale of *Pyramus & Thisbe* in such a way as to be almost a direct translation from Diodorus Siculus' introduction to his account of the Semiramis story.³⁷

Other parallels to the Semiramis mythology are numerous and easy to detect through comparison to Diodorus Siculus' account. For example, in Diodorus' work, we find that: Onnes, husband of Semiramis, is emotionally enslaved by her (3.5); Onnes commits suicide because he cannot win Semiramis, and she then marries Ninus (3.6); the burial mound of Ninus is mentioned as a significant landmark (3.7); Semiramis is depicted on horseback and with her husband, who is spearing a lion (3.8); and Semiramis' dove transformation is mentioned again (3.20). Even in these few details, thematic links of emotion, personal

³⁵ Even Bömer (1969-86) on this passage lists only the ancient references related to Semiramis and the walls of Babylon, and goes no further. Due (1974) and Duke (1971) come closest in their discussions of the origin of this tale, but fail to draw the links between the Semiramis references and the similarities in the two tales.

³⁶ See Perry (1967), and Levi (1944).

³⁷ The daughter of Minyas starts off by wondering whether to tell of one Dercetis, who was changed to a fish, or how her daughter was changed to a dove (a reference to the version of the Semiramis tale where she herself was turned into a dove – one that Diodorus also chooses not to follow – a detail which could possibly have been one of those that suggested the linking of the two tales to Ovid, since Thisbe and doves are linked together in Homer, *Il.* 2.502), or how an unnamed nymph changed the bodies of some boys into fish and became one herself, and then decides on the metamorphosis of the mulberry tree's colour. Diodorus leads into the Semiramis tale by telling of the transformations of people into fish and doves, and then to that of Dercetis, and then Semiramis.

passion and dedication aiding ruin are clear, particularly in the similarities of the suicide motif.

Further evidence that these two tales are united and that references to it are included at least partially to emphasise the themes common to both, derives from what we know of other versions of the Ninus and Semiramis tale. Hyginus, in his list of women who committed suicide (*Fab.* 243), states that Semiramis killed herself when her horse died. This, when taken with Pliny's statement that Semiramis loved a horse so much that she even married/ had sex with it, "*equum adamatum a Semiramideusque in coitum Iuba auctor est*" (*N.H.* 8.64),³⁸ gives us the tale of a woman who fell in love and who committed suicide after the death of her loved one. That these two myths were explicitly associated somewhere in ancient times is suggested by the fact that in Hyginus' list of twenty-five women who committed suicide, Thisbe's suicide is given 24th, and Semiramis' 25th. For the learned reader, Ovid's allusions to the Semiramis myth, and the fact that he has the lovers meeting specifically at Ninus' tomb, have the potential to conjure up a grim and possibly suicide-related ending to the story before it has even been presented.

Summing up, there are a number of similarities between the stories surrounding Semiramis, and that of *Pyramus & Thisbe*. There is similarity in the actions committed, the motivations for such actions, the context in which they occur, and the numerous allusions to this *Ninus & Semiramis* folklore which emphasise the themes found in *Pyramus & Thisbe*, particularly those related to the destruction brought about by excess value and personal passion.

6. Overall Philosophical Outlook

As we have seen, Pyramus, in failing to consider the facts in front of him, or the alternate possibilities to the fate of Thisbe, makes assumptions and acts on emotion. While these actions are not presented as being a natural aspect of his character, it is consistent with the depiction of characters throughout the *Metamorphoses* as having a dichotomy between mind and body (reason and emotion) inherent in their metaphysical makeup. Here, emotion

³⁸ The "Iuba" referred to here is Juba II, king of Numidia and noted author in his time, extant c.50 B.C. – 23 A.D. Hyg. *Fab.* 243 has a similar reference.

befuddles Pyramus' rational faculty and means that despite his virtues and generally positive presentation, he has a weakness that is beyond his control.

This leads to another broader implication which we see throughout the work, and which was prominent in a slightly different form in the story of Meleager: the depiction of heroes, of the brave, the strong, the virtuous, as having what can in effect be classified as feet of clay – a fatal flaw of one kind or another that can not only allow but even aid their destruction, misery, and failure. This flaw may, for example, be part of a character's metaphysical makeup (one that does not stem from their characters, their choices, their actions, and is unable to be controlled or altered by them) or be tied to their virtues. As in earlier chapters, it is often the case that those who have particularly strong values and who pursue their values and moral principles (no matter whether subjective, independent, or intrinsic) consistently, thus open themselves up to negative fates which they would not otherwise have suffered. In the case of Pyramus, we see this not only in the ruinous outcome brought about by his emotions and the extent of his passions, but by humorous and unreal portrayal of their love (exemplified by the phrase "what does love not see" "*quid non sensit amor*," 4.68), and the sabotage of the pathetic and sympathetic aspects of his death scene by making it grotesque and comic, which serves to undercut his stature as something special.

Once again, this is all tied in with the idea of determinism, in the sense that the characters' fates are determined by something other than themselves. Not only are their emotions out of their control because of their very metaphysical makeup, but chance is again a major factor in determining their fates. Pyramus finds himself in a situation that occurs completely by chance; it is not a logical sequitur to either of the lovers' actions, nor is it presented as logically demanded (according to their characters, values, or anything else about the details of their lives) by the nature of the universe in which they live. Thus the presentation of virtue as impotent comes through, given Pyramus' character and the chance circumstances that ultimately lead to his fate. The idea of determinism is reinforced by the presentation of Thisbe's failure to achieve her values (in being united with Pyramus), as it is out of her control. She is an entirely passive character with respect to the main conflict. Pyramus kills himself and thus makes Thisbe's misery inevitable.

A key implication of the role of chance and the idea of determinism in this story is that life is haphazard. Because of this, and since one's virtues can help destroy just as much as one's faults, both moral virtue and vice are implied to be inconsequential to the achievement of

one's values. Here the emphasis is on the irrelevance of strong values to even the virtuous, because such things go hand in hand with misery. Also implied is the general inefficacy of the good and of virtue itself. Here we see a situation in which these qualities can offer no defence from and are even crucial to the destruction of the characters who hold them. Nor are they doomed on account of a hostile universe which is by nature opposed to them; they ruin themselves totally independently – thus their goodness is crucial to their destruction.³⁹

Summary

As a whole, the philosophical ideas inherent in this atypical story are consistent with those found in the types of stories discussed in the previous chapters. Prominently, we see the presentation of a mind-body dichotomy inherent in the characters' metaphysical makeup – which is one of the reasons that this story contains the themes of emotion and personal value linked with misery and destruction – and, tied to this, the depiction of even virtuous characters being majorly flawed. We also see the presentation of life being haphazard in its outcomes, both because chance plays a significant role, and on account of the fact that characters' virtues can, in certain situations, help facilitate their negative fates.

³⁹ As Anderson (1995b) states it, Pyramus “dies because of his rash misjudgement. Thisbe kills herself over Pyramus' corpse, and she defines the meaning of her act, invoking both their parents and the gods to solemnise their devotion” (p.268).

Chapter 6 – Pygmalion

The story of *Pygmalion* is atypical in many ways: it is based on a single character who is depicted in a positive light (at least by the internal narrator) and meets a happy ending. However, he nevertheless commits actions that are significantly influenced by emotion – which is normally presented throughout the poem as leading to a negative fate.

Despite this, the aspects of the poem's overall philosophical outlook implied within this story are consistent with what we have seen revealed through the stories examined earlier. Ideas present include the inherent dichotomy between mind and body; the superiority of gods over men; and the idea of determinism, present through the aforementioned factors as well as the significant role that chance plays in this story's outcome. Additionally, we again see hints of the presentation of moral virtue as impotent and a seeming indifference to characters' fates. Furthermore, we see the idea presented that while emotion will inevitably set one on a logical course towards negative results, negative results of such action are not necessary – positive results can come about if the capricious gods, who have power superior to both man and the laws of nature, so wish it.

1. Introduction

The story of *Pygmalion* as told in the *Metamorphoses* is extremely simple; it being, on the surface, a narration of events, rather than the illustration of the causes, actions, and results of a conflict. The main features are as follows: Pygmalion, after seeing and being repulsed by the prostituting Propoetides, abstains from women. Nevertheless, being a highly skilled artist, he proceeds to carve a statue of a perfect woman out of ivory. He falls in love with the statue, behaves towards it in many ways as if it were a real woman, and prays to Venus at one of her festivals that he may have a wife just like his ivory statue. Venus accedes to his request by transforming Pygmalion's statue into his desired woman, and a happy marriage ensues.

The context in which this tale is told should be noted and will become relevant as we proceed. The story is told by an internal narrator, Orpheus, famous for his skill in song and poetry. He, having lost his beloved Eurydice to the realm of Hades, sought and won her back by the power of his love and his artistry, and lost her again because of his failure to adequately adhere to the gods' stipulations. After this, he disdains women, turns to pederasty, and consoles himself in his art. He does this by singing songs about the loves of gods for boys, the wickedness of women, the ruin to which love comes, even when the divine is involved, and the success of an artist who disdains women and consoles himself in art – the story of *Pygmalion*. As we will see, the point of Orpheus telling this story is to present Pygmalion in a positive light and thus, by implicit comparison with himself, depict his actions in the same way. Consequently, the aspects of this story which do not reflect so positively on Pygmalion, can be seen to be unconsciously ironic on Orpheus' part.

The story of *Pygmalion* is, like that of *Pyramus & Thisbe*, one for which Ovid is by far the most extensive extant ancient source and, given what we know about the Pygmalions of history and mythology pre-Ovid, it is likely that several of the main points of this tale are original to Ovid. However, here again our author makes several allusions to variant versions of the tale he has decided to tell, and these serve to associate the character and actions of Ovid's Pygmalion with others whose character and actions are quite different. Such associations, as will become clear, undercut the pureness, idealism, and virtue of Ovid's character. The alternate literature to which the text subtly alludes can be summarised as follows.

There are two significant figures referenced by ancient authors as going by the name of Pygmalion: one the king of Cyprus, the other the king of Tyre.¹ The Tyrian Pygmalion was thought to have been king in the late 9th – early 8th centuries B.C., and brother of the famous Dido, whose husband he murdered before the altars of the gods out of greed.² Allusions to this version are present in the tale of the Cerastae (one of the two stories which introduces that of Pygmalion) – who sacrifice guests on an altar of Juppiter – and by the reference to

¹ Both are sometimes conflated, and this seems to have first occurred several centuries before Ovid. For instance, Porphyry (*De Abst.* 4.15) cites Neanthes of Cyzicus (thought to have written sometime in the 4th century B.C.) and Asclepiades of Cyprus (1st c. B.C. – 1st C. A.D.) as both stating that Pygmalion, king of Cyprus, was originally a Phoenician but ruled in Cyprus.

² Verg. *Aen.* 1.343-64; Ital. *Pun.* 1.21-3; Joseph. *In Ap.* 1.18; Ap. *Pun.* 1.21-3; Just. *Epit. Trog.* 18.4.8. We can be sure that Ovid knew of this version because mention is made of this Pygmalion and his relationship to Dido in both the *Fasti* 3.574ff and at *Heroides* 7.150.

Sidon (10.267).³ The hint that Ovid's Pygmalion is at least potentially of royal birth, given that his grandson Cinyras is king of Cyprus (10.436), is another possible allusion to this tale.

However, the Cyprian figure seems to be closer to the mythical Pygmalion Ovid had in mind.⁴ The main source for this Pygmalion derives from the 3rd century B.C. Philostephanus, whose relation of the tale of this Pygmalion in his *Cypriaca* comes down to us through the 3rd century A.D. Arnobius Afer, and the 2nd century A.D. Clement of Alexandria. In Arnobius (6.22.3), Pygmalion is king of Cyprus who, "his mind, spirit, light of reason, and judgement having become lost," "*mente anima lumine rationis iudicioque caecatis*," loved and (among other things) attempted to have sex with a statue of Venus on his bed as if it were a wife, when carried away by an overwhelming emotional frenzy.⁵ In Clement's version (*Prot.* 4.50-1), we are not told that Pygmalion is a king, but we do hear of his amorous advances towards the statue of Venus. He then proceeds to mention several similar stories and concludes by noting the absurdity of statue-loving.⁶ The similarities between Ovid's tale and that of the Cyprian Pygmalion are obvious, particularly with respect to the particulars of the naked statue in bed, and Pygmalion's behaviour towards it. With this version in mind, it is hard to read about the Ovidian "*heros*" (10.290) without thinking that this "hero" has some peculiar, perverse, and indeed potentially humorously non-heroic qualities, and is not to be taken completely seriously as an example of rationality or virtue.

Murder and sacrifice are linked with the Pygmalion tradition in more ways than mentioned above. Not only do several authors present one of the historical Pygmalions as impiously murdering his family members (out of lust for gold), but Servius, in his commentary on Verg. *Geor.* 3.5, mentions the Cyprian Pygmalion as the one who told king Busiris of Egypt that his country's famine would not end unless he sacrificed guests to Juppiter. Although this is a

³ The Cerastae themselves are only attested here in the extant ancient literature.

⁴ But should not to be confused with the historical king of Cyprus murdered by Ptolemy I Soter in 312 B.C. (Dio. Sic. 19.79.4), to whom Ovid does not seem to refer.

⁵ Clement proceeds to tell the story of the "Cnidian Aphrodite" – a statue by Praxiteles – towards which similar amorous advances were made. This story was, according to Clement, related by the 4th – 3rd century B.C. Poseidippus, in his work on Cnidos. This account is also given in Plin. *N.H.* 36.21; and Luc. *Am.* 15-16, *Im.* 4. See Bettini (1999), pp.59-74, for a comprehensive discussion of the ancient references dealing with those who fell in love with statues or treated them as a living lover.

⁶ "Now craftsmanship is powerful, but it cannot beguile a rational being, nor yet those who have lived according to reason... For no man in his senses would have embraced the statue of a goddess, or have been buried with a lifeless paramour, or have fallen in love with a daemon and a stone" (tran. Butterworth, 1919). "*Δραστήριος μὲν ἡ δημιουργικὴ, ἀλλ' οὐχ οἷα τε ἀπατῆσαι λογικὸν οὐδὲ μὴν τοὺς κατὰ λόγον βεβιωκότας... Οὐδὲ γὰρ ἂν θεῶ τις συνεπλάκη, οὐδ' ἂν νεκρῶ τις συνετάφη, οὐδ' ἂν ἡράσθη δαίμονος καὶ λίθου ἄνθρωπος σωφρονῶν*" (4.57.5).

variant to the traditional version of the tale in which a brother of Pygmalion, king of Cyprus, makes this prediction,⁷ there is still a connection with a Pygmalion inherent in this story. In Ovid's version, this is referenced in the story of the Cerastae who slaughtered guests with impious sacrifice "*sacris... nefandis*" (10.228) on an altar sacred to Juppiter "*Iovis Hospitis ara*" (10.224). Finally, the relationship between Pygmalion and human sacrifice is again evidenced in the sources cited by Porphyry (see n.1 above), who both state that human sacrifice first took place in Pygmalion's time.

There are also hints of a link between the tradition of Pygmalion and prostitution. While this is not associated with the figure of Pygmalion himself, this theme occasionally occurs in the stories surrounding him.⁸ Prostitution is prominent in the other introductory story to Pygmalion, namely that of the Propoetides, which repels Pygmalion into bachelorhood and misogyny.

2. Conflict

The central action of this story is simple: a man carves a statue and falls in love with it. Nevertheless, there is enough in this to imply the central conflict; we can immediately tell that by the very nature of his love, this relationship is likely to be somewhat one-sided and to present certain difficulties.

⁷ Ovid shows his knowledge of the Busiris tale at *Met.* 9.182-3, and *Ars Am.* 1.647-52. The most prominent examples of this story associated with Pygmalion are found in Hyg. *Fab.* 56, and Apollod. *Lib.* 2.5.11.

⁸ This is suggested by Justin's epitome of the 1st century B.C. Pompeius Trogus who, during his narration of this Pygmalion's murder of various kinsmen out of greed of gold and his pursuit of his sister Dido, mentions that "there was a custom in Cypris to send virgin girls to the sea shore on certain days before their marriages for the making of the money they would need for their dowry, and to give libations to Venus for their chastity having been left behind" "*Mos erat Cypriis uirgines ante nuptias statutis diebus do talem pecuniam quae situras in quaestum ad litus maris mittere, pro reliqua pudicitia libamenta Veneri soluturas,*" (18.5.4) and that Pygmalion's daughter Elissa abducted eighty of these women to be wives of her sailors, and so that the city she would consequently co-found – Carthage – would have a posterity. Here we have reference to prostitutes, the preservation of their virtue, Venus, and Cyprus, encompassed by a story about king Pygmalion. In addition to this, we have Apollodorus' statement that Pygmalion was king of Cyprus and that his granddaughters, on account of Venus, slept with strangers and ended up dying in Egypt (3.14.3). Apart from these hints, the only genuine ancient reference we have (apart from Ovid) for the Propoetides is that found in Plutarch's *Moralia*, 777D, although this material is little more than a parallel to that which is found in Ovid, and offers little evidence for a substantial alternative source. For the related issue of the oft-mentioned connection between prostitution and the Phoenicians, see Briquel-Chatonnet (1992).

What we have is essentially a one-person conflict. There is no opposition from any being, mortal or otherwise, to keep Pygmalion from his desires. He is the only one who has a choice in the matter, and who sets up the course that will bring him into inexorable conflict with the metaphysical laws of the universe he inhabits. Additionally, no value is presented as being at stake for anyone other than himself.⁹ Pygmalion is the protagonist in this story. The antagonist is nature itself – an inanimate adversary that can only act as its nature dictates. Suspense is primarily created through the decisions and actions of Pygmalion, the volitional figure who has come into conflict with nature. Meaning comes from the results of this conflict when considered in the light of Pygmalion's character, motivations for his actions, and values at stake.

The value at stake for Pygmalion is (so it is implied) his happiness, which rests on the outcome of the main conflict, namely his desire for and attempt to obtain a perfect wife, as represented artistically by his statue of a woman of such beauty that it surpasses any woman that could be naturally born "*qua femina nasci nulla potest*" (10.248-9), and to which Pygmalion also attributes qualities associated with moral perfection. This is what he creates, loves, and prays for.

Thus the central conflict is: Pygmalion v. nature, over his desire for his statue as a wife – a wife unlike any naturally born woman.

3. Plot-development

The plot-development of this story is particularly easy to follow, given that it is the only story covered in depth in this thesis where there is no overlap between the three parts of the Aristotelian plot-structure.¹⁰

⁹ In the *Pyramus & Thisbe* myth we almost had something similar. However, although Pyramus was his own greatest antagonist, in that story there was another character and other values at stake, without which the central action situation would have been significantly different, and who therefore needed to be included in the statement of the central conflict.

¹⁰ On the structure of the *Pygmalion* story generally, and its place within the *Metamorphoses* as whole, see Bauer (1962).

Backstory and establishment of the situation

This part of the plot-development is presented simply. The Propoetides, whose story leads into that of Pygmalion, are first mentioned at 10.221, and then, after the digression of the story of the Cerastae – during which we see the character of Venus through her punishment of impiety – we return to the Propoetides for just five more lines (10.238-43), learning that they were made prostitutes by Venus for denying her godhead. In this we are given both the backstory and inciting incident. We are told that Pygmalion, who had seen the Propoetides spending their lives in (moral) crime (prostitution) “*aevum per crimen agentis*” (10.243), was repulsed by their faults “*offensus vitiis*” (10.244), and he lived alone “*caelebs*” (10.245) on this account. This is the introduction to Pygmalion’s character and where we see the initial motivation for him to set his course.

While disdaining the morally flawed women of his acquaintance, and subsequently assuming that all women are the same, Pygmalion creates a perfect woman out of ivory,¹¹ and with its beauty he falls in love. This love is primarily a physical one, as we are told that he is inflamed for the appearance of the body “*haurit/ pectore Pygmalion simulati corporis ignes*” (10.252-3). We now have the situation, Pygmalion’s character and his motivations, and the main conflict is implied – Pygmalion v. nature/ reality, as a consequence of his falling in love with a statue.

Build-up

What follows constitutes the rise in intensity to the climax. Again this is given without complication. We see the main conflict further concretised and intensified through the many facets of Pygmalion’s behaviour towards this realistic statue. He acts more and more as if it were a real lover he is trying to please. Then we have the climax – the festival of Venus at which Pygmalion prays to the goddess of love that he, who has hitherto kept aloof from women, may have in marriage a woman like his ivory statue (if not the statue itself). We see here, in effect, his final decision as to what exactly he desires – something which is a physical impossibility and, in his eyes, a moral impossibility – and the extent to which he desires it.

¹¹ As Fränkel (1956) puts it, what we see is “Pygmalion’s escape into creative art from the defects of reality” (p.96).

Pygmalion

Also here, we learn definitively from his words to Venus at the altar that he does all of the above knowing that the statue is not alive; he knows that what he desires is impossible. Venus, having perceived that Pygmalion really wishes for his ivory statue as wife, gives an auspicious sign.

Resolution

Finally we have the resolution, where we find discover the outcome of this seemingly irresolvable conflict. Here the impossible is brought about by Venus, the goddess of love who, as a divinity, has power of nature itself. Venus brings it about that his statue transforms under Pygmalion's touch into his dream partner. The goddess graces the marriage between the two and it is implied that they are happy thereafter.¹²

4. Characterisation

As observed above, there is only one essential character needed to enact the plot of this story – Pygmalion. Neither the women that so repulsed Pygmalion before the events of the story, nor the model he created, nor even Venus are essential.

Pygmalion's key actions and decisions are easy to see. He disdains womankind for their vices, but in the meantime creates a statue of the perfect woman, falls in love with it, and treats it like a real woman. Then, when this is not enough, he prays to the goddess of love that he acquire a real woman like his statue. As far as his initial rejection of women goes, we are told explicitly by the narrator that the motivation for this attitude was the crime "*crimen*"

¹² I am of the opinion that the concluding lines of this story provide sufficient evidence that the unnarrated post-wedding ending of this story is meant to be taken as unquestionably positive. For instance, we have the exchange of looks between the lovers – discussed thoroughly by Bettini (1999), p.150 (see also Stieber, 1998, pp. 81-3, and MacLachlan, 1993, p.66). In addition, we have the words "*positoque rigore/ ... cedit*," which can apply to both the statue softening into flesh, and the softening of the woman to a man's love. As Sharrock (1991) put it "The statue ceases to resist Pygmalion's love and is shaped to his erotic art. Now the flesh really is depressed at the lover's touch, as he had simply imagined previously, and yields. *cedit* is both metaphorical and literal. Not only does the ivory-flesh physically yield to the touch but also the woman's body yields sexually as a result of the lover's touch" (p.47). Although I will not repeat here all that Sharrock and others (such as Griffin, 1977) have said, a large portion of the end section can be taken not only as a description of a statue turning into a woman, but a woman becoming fit to be an elegiac, and specifically sexual, lover – something at least suggestive of a not wholly loveless relationship to come.

(10.243) and faults "*vitiis... plurima*" (10.244) of the Propoetides. The most explicitly depicted fault that offended Pygmalion is the Propoetides' prostitution. But also potentially relevant to Pygmalion's motivation is their denial of Venus as a goddess.¹³ This would be consistent with the piety Pygmalion later shows towards the goddess, and forms a contrast between the two stories through their respectively different endings. Whatever the specific fault to which Pygmalion reacts, it is clear that his reaction is primarily a moral one. Note that it is specifically stated that it was the faults of the minds of the Propoetides (although reflected in their physical actions) that offended Pygmalion: "faults, which to the greatest extent nature gave to the feminine *mind*" "*vitiis, quae plurima menti/ femineae natura dedit*" (10.244-5). This taste of what is possible to the female mind is enough to send Pygmalion into bachelorhood and thus, to an extent, suggests the degree to which he holds this moral code. However, it should be noted that Pygmalion's view of women is based on a very generalising assumption, not on a careful study of reality. Moreover, his error is highlighted by the fact that Venus, just a few lines earlier (10.228ff), catches herself on the brink of making a similar assumption after witnessing the deeds of the Cerastae.¹⁴ Thus we have the presentation of Pygmalion as a misogynist according to his own limited sphere of knowledge, the reason for it, the motivations for many of his following actions, and the aspects of his character which are implied as a consequence, i.e. his values.

Turning to his following actions, the fact that Pygmalion, although disdaining women in general, creates a statue of a woman which (the internal narrator, Orpheus, assures us) is more beautiful than any ever known "*formamque dedit, qua femina nasci/ nulla potest*" (10.248-9), suggests some sort of idealism on his part. The physical aspect of this idealism is

¹³ Which is in itself implied by the act of prostitution, since a prostitute is in effect a woman who sells her body for money and for whom sexual pleasure is separated from romantic love, which, at least in Orpheus' view, is equal to separation from the influence of Venus.

¹⁴ This generalisation also reflects on the view Ovid intends the audience to have on internal narrator, Orpheus. As Glenn (1986) notes, "here Orpheus generalises for himself and for Pygmalion... That such unqualified generalising is wrong of itself, Orpheus should be well aware, for a few lines earlier, he himself pointed out that Venus had almost committed the same error. She had been about to abandon all the people of Cyprus because of the abominations of one group, the Cerastae. In other words, she had been about to generalise about a whole population on the basis of the behavior of a fraction of it. Certainly Venus has avoided one mental error, or fault of mind, that Orpheus and Pygmalion do not. Furthermore, as singer and reteller of myths, Orpheus should have known that the corpus of myth contained Pyrrha and Baucis as well as Myrrha and Byblis. But it is part of Orpheus' blindness that he is unaware of his own inconsistencies and limitations" (p.138). Nevertheless, such a generalisation is consistent with the content of Orpheus' song. The women he depicts (Myrrha and her nurse) are as wicked as he makes out.

expressed through the specifics of the love that it induces.¹⁵ For example, the narrator's statement that Pygmalion was inflamed for the form of a body "*corporis*" (10.253) (like which he prays to Venus to have as a wife) – and explains at length how Pygmalion interacts physically with this inanimate form. However, that it is not only the purely physical aspects of a woman for which he initially creates a substitute is shown by the fact that the values he recreates are not just aesthetic/ physical (at least for their own sake).¹⁶ Note that the statue's appearance "is that of a real virgin" "*virginis est verae facies*" (10.250) and one whom modesty would restrict from moving under the gaze of a man "*si non obstet reverentia*" (10.250-1) – thus implying the importance to him of purity in spirit.¹⁷ Furthermore, Ovid specifically points us to what Pygmalion is seeking by having related earlier what he was missing "without a wife he was living *unmarried*, and for a long time was lacking a *partner* for his *marriage* bed" "*sine coniuge caelebs/ vivebat thalamique diu consorte carebat*" (10.245-6), that is, a spouse/wife (more than just a mistress) to share his marriage-bed.

From these actions and what it is that incited them, we are given the impression (this is at least the impression Orpheus, the internal narrator, clearly means us to have – discussed below) that Pygmalion is a man of morally virtuous disposition, one who explicitly disdains purely physical lust in favour of moral purity and is free of faults in either character or morals. These last two aspects are presented as being reasonable given what we know of his knowledge and experiences. However, this begs the more fundamental question: would a sensible, rational man, act towards and speak about a statue as he does? The answer is, obviously, no. Although it is his creation, Pygmalion himself questions whether the statue is real: "often he raises his hands, testing the work, whether it might be a living body or ivory, and not yet does he admit it to be ivory" "*saepe manus operi temptantes admovet, an sit/ corpus an illud ebur, nec adhuc ebur esse fatetur*" (10.254-5). This behaviour is indicative of one who has lost touch with reality and rational thought.

Further abnormal behaviour comes in his next actions: Pygmalion not only admires the statue, but talks to it, kisses it and believes his kisses are returned. He touches it so ardently that he fears he has bruised it, brings it gifts, clothes it and decorates it with expensive

¹⁵ As Otis (1970) observes, "Pygmalion is not the perverted iconophile of the Cypriot legend but the idealist who realises his love by his very refusal to accept a sordid reality" (p.268).

¹⁶ A point emphasised by Solodow (1988), who states that "The statue is outstanding both morally and physically" (p.216).

¹⁷ The word "*virgo*" is also used at 10.275 by the narrator to define exactly what Pygmalion had in mind.

jewellery, and even puts it naked¹⁸ in his bed covered with expensive fabrics (10.256-69).¹⁹ Pygmalion treats the statue as more than just a symbolic substitute for a real romantic partner; he treats it as he would a real one. This suggests that Ovid does not intend Pygmalion to be viewed as admirably as Orpheus makes out. Further evidence for this comes in the form of the multiple words of conception found in the telling of the tale: “*nasci*” (10.248); “*concepit*” (10.249); “*concipit*” (10.290); suggesting a link between Pygmalion the creator and Pygmalion the father bringing forth a child.²⁰ Following on from this, if we consider the Myrrha myth told immediately afterwards, it is not a big leap to see Pygmalion as a father who has an unnatural relationship with his offspring.²¹ To this we can add the plethora of allusions made throughout the course of these tales (including the stories of the Cerastae and Propoetides) to alternate versions of the Pygmalion myth, which remind the reader that the traditional Pygmalion was not at all the pillar of virtue that Orpheus might have his listener believe, and that a number of the perversities and crimes of these previous Pygmalions are hinted at here (see *1. Introduction*).

Nevertheless, we later learn from his words and actions at the altar of Venus that Pygmalion always had some implicit idea of the distinction between reality and unreality (such as his reluctance to make his prayer – presumably because he knows he is acting abnormally and does not want to be rebuked by the gods for it – and his decision not to pray for an impossibility,

¹⁸ Anderson (1972) also notes on 10.264-6 that Ovid uses the feminine “*nuda*” to emphasise Pygmalion’s assigning of gender to the statue.

¹⁹ That the statue is on the bed when Pygmalion returns from the festival (10.281) suggests that that is where he generally keeps it. Also, all the attentions he pays to his statue are stock traits of the elegiac lover and his presents are apt for the kind of gifts Ovid himself suggested an elegiac lover should give to win his mistress at *Ars Am.* 2.262ff. However, even the narrator of the *Ars* would have been hard pressed to peddle the idea that these things were enough to win the love of a statue (see Holzberg, 2002, and Sharrock, 1991, a landmark article on Pygmalion’s presentation as an elegiac lover, and Ovid’s use of both elegiac and specifically erotic language in this story). Regarding the perversity of putting a statue of one’s beloved in one’s bed, we may parallel this tale with that of Admetus in Euripides’ *Alcestis* (348-52) who, having been presented as generally weak and irrational, promises Alcestis that as a memorial to her he will have a statue made which he will put in his bed and embrace therein. This is also presented as rather odd, if not perverse. The story of Laodamia, who also had a statue made of her beloved and put it in her bed and fondled, is also comparable. Ovid refers to this myth at *Her.* 13.151ff, and *Rem. Am.* 723-4. See also Hyg. *Fab.* 103-4; Luc. *D. Mort.* 23(28); and Apollod. *Ep.* 4.3.30. For the possible link between this story and that of Euripides’ *Alcestis*, see Wilamowitz-Moellendorf (1906), Vol.3, p.91, n.1, and Trenkner (1958), p.67.

²⁰ The idea of an artist as a parent and his creations his children was an idea also referred to by Ovid in *Trist.* 3.1.65-6. This idea is not without precedent; Bettini (1999), pp.59-74, gives a summary of ancient references to people who developed amorous passions for statues, noting that several died or committed suicide in the way those who committed incest did, and how the unnatural crime of incest can be paralleled with that of an unnatural passion for a statue.

²¹ See Nagle (1983). An interesting juxtaposition, given that the Myrrha myth is generally supposed to be a complete contrast to that of Pygmalion. For example, see Otis (1970), p.225; and Galinsky (1975) p.89.

but rather something within rational hope).²² Thus Pygmalion does not deceive himself in the surpassing physical beauty of his creation, although his actions still retain a certain amount of irrationality, emotionally-driven action, and perversity. Here we have another example of the dichotomy between reason and emotion which is depicted as present in so many of the *Metamorphoses*' characters.

As far as Pygmalion's approach to morality goes, we can easily tell that it is of the mixed variety, and is neither based on the subjective nor intrinsic. This is shown through his moral rebellion against the acts of the Propoetides, and his later considerations that illustrate his ability to use reason throughout the story – he is thus not even a part-time emotionalist. But while his rebellion against the Propoetides may be in agreement with that which is intrinsically moral, emotion is still a significant factor in controlling his values. Thus he holds a mixed approach to morality. He acts according to certain principles, but is still influenced significantly by his emotions.

Evaluation of characters

Here is a character who is predominantly presented in a positive light, both in the eyes of Venus and Orpheus. He disdains the behaviour of women who deny Venus and spend their lives as prostitutes; he is pious, and it is potentially for this that he is rewarded by Venus; he has initiative and is a man of action – not just one who professes hopes and wishes but does nothing to achieve them – who demonstrates his values are and their significance to him in action; and he is called a “*heros*” (a word last used in reference to Ajax at 10.207).²³ Nevertheless, for all his good intentions, he is carried away by his emotions and acts in a manner wholly inconsistent with what the normal expectations of a man living a life of

²² As Anderson (1972) notes on 10.273-6, both “*timide*” (10.274), like “*non ausus*” (10.275), “helps to qualify Pygmalion's state of mind; he is not suffering from *furor* or *insania*,” that is, not acting purely on emotion. “He has enough control over his reason to avoid praying for an impossibility.” This is also supported when we see later (10.287) that Pygmalion finds it hard to believe that the statue is undergoing such a miraculous transformation.

²³ Also used of Orpheus himself by the external narrator (10.50). That aside, it must also be remembered that “*heros*” is Orpheus' evaluation of Pygmalion, and its use here is somewhat ironic because Pygmalion is by all the normal criteria, explicitly unheroic – he neither braves great dangers, commits great deeds of valour or physical strength. This is evidence that Orpheus is deliberately trying to portray Pygmalion in a more positive fashion than would normally be the case (discussed further below). It is also possible that Orpheus sees Pygmalion as a hero because of the triumph of his artistic qualities (just like Orpheus – he too brought his beloved to life through art, and finds his consolation therein after her second loss); a good reason to pick this tale over those of Admetus and Laodamia.

reason. Pygmalion is also presented as somewhat perverted, in a kind of tongue-in-cheek way, by showing him as a man who disdains the flesh and its associated passions, and yet goes to such extraordinary lengths to irrationally treat his statue as a real life lover, although still consciously knowing reality to be otherwise. Despite this, he is never openly criticised for falling in love with a statue of the ideal – it really is the closest thing in reality to what he desires.

This all makes sense given the context in which the story is being told by the internal narrator at this point of the *Metamorphoses*, Orpheus. If we remember that Orpheus is singing this story, having lost his beloved Eurydice and as a consequence has developed a disdain for other women (and even taken a fancy to young boys 10.78-85), it is not difficult to understand that he might wish to tell a story which could be taken as evidence for the justness of his actions.²⁴ However, it cannot be forgotten that Orpheus is presented as ultimately meeting his death through his own disdain for women (11.1-43). Thus the fact that Ovid has Orpheus use, as evidence for the justness of his actions, the story of a man who, like himself, disdains women and leads a slightly perverse but on the whole virtuous life, reflects on Orpheus in the same light.

Once again we see that Ovid has his character (this time Orpheus) tell a myth a certain way – one which has an explicit theme (meant to be available to his internal audience), but which really has a secondary explicit theme to inform the reader about some aspect of the internal narrator's character or mind-set.²⁵ Here Orpheus presents Pygmalion in a generally positive, virtuous light, and does nothing to explicitly contradict this. Nevertheless, when the context in which Orpheus presents this story is considered and certain aspects of the story are observed (such as allusion to previous versions of the myth and various subtleties in the language used), Pygmalion does not come across as quite so exemplary as Orpheus would

²⁴ This is consistent with what we see throughout the poem: all of Ovid's internal narrators are motivated to tell the stories they do in certain way, with certain themes, to create specific impressions (see discussions in *Ceres 1. Introduction*). The other stories Orpheus tells are of course all related to his plight: *Venus & Adonis* reminds the audience of what happens when one ignores the warnings of the gods (as Orpheus did and so lost Eurydice); *Hippomenes & Atalanta* reinforces the "love conquers all with the gods' aid" motif, and also concretises another example of the capricious nature of the gods – Venus in particular – and how if spurned, she may just as easily cause a tragic fate. Also in these two stories we see the ultimately destructive power of love – even when the gods are involved. The stories of *Ganymede* and *Hyacinthus* provide examples of gods setting the precedent of loving boys, and that of *Myrrha* does much to depict the wickedness of women.

²⁵ We have already seen this in the case of *Pyramus & Thisbe* in which the influence of both Dionysus and Venus upon the tale, and its manner of narration without the knowledge of the internal narrators reflects on these internal narrators on levels other than that which they consciously intend.

have us believe. Orpheus is in fact unconscious of the ironies of his own narration. As a whole, there is once again indifference in Pygmalion's presentation. While the distinction is made between his positive and negative qualities, no particular reason is given for Ovid's external audience to either venerate or despise him.

5. Theme

The plot-theme of this story is very simple: *a misogynistic artist creates a statue of his ideal woman and falls passionately in love with it*. The main conflict is Pygmalion v. nature itself, over his desire for his statue as a wife. The outcome – the transformation of Pygmalion's statue into his ideal woman, followed by an implicitly happy marriage blessed by Venus – is a consequence of Venus' intervention on behalf of Pygmalion to change the laws of nature.

Nevertheless, there are several important aspects of Pygmalion's character and actions that are necessary to make the events unfold as they do: his moral principles, which cause him to disdain the Propoetides and which contribute to his consequent misogyny; his idealism, which leads to the creation of a statue of his perfect woman; his mind-body dichotomy – a factor which must be present to cause such a character to fall passionately in love with and behave irrationally towards a statue he knows to be inanimate; and his piety to Venus, which causes him to pray to the goddess to fulfil his desires.

However, this final outcome is not presented as a necessary or even logical result of any aspect of Pygmalion's character. His artistic talent is not shown as being enough to create happiness out of such a situation – it has limits. Pygmalion does all that his artistry is capable of doing to bring his ideal woman to physical existence. It is only with Venus' aid that this is brought to a happy fulfilment, transforming his creation into a fully-fledged human being with the external physical appearance of his statue, and presumably with the non-physical qualities which Pygmalion had attributed to it. Nor does the result stem from his idealism. Without Venus, this idealism is even presented as being harmful to him. For, leading him to disdain the women of reality and having created one better than that found in the world, he is in effect trapped in a situation in which there is no potential for romantic satisfaction. The situation is made worse by being overcome by emotion and falling in love with his statue. He is thus trapped in an unfulfilling one-sided relationship, that has the added potential of being

emotionally painful, not just devoid of emotion. Consequently, personal success and happiness become even more unlikely. Finally, we see that it is not Pygmalion's moral principles that bring him success. Irrespective of his moral rectitude, these are soon presented as being derailed by his assumption that all women are like the Propoetides (an assumption implicitly based on emotion, and therefore irrational), which leads him on a misogynistic path, that is not presented as likely to lead to happiness. Similarly, we learn from Orpheus' fate that a positive outcome is not to be expected from the spurning of women or turning to art; in fact quite the reverse.²⁶

Despite the above, Pygmalion does achieve his seemingly impossible desire, and this comes about through Venus' heeding of Pygmalion's prayer. Ovid emphasises the importance of Venus' presence and intervention by stating explicitly that she was the one who brought about this particular result, "at the marriage, *which she brought about*, the goddess is present" "*coniugio, quod fecit, adest dea*" (10.295). Venus' reward has led several scholars to see this story as one depicting the *logical* results of Pygmalion's purity and virtuous love. For instance, Otis (1970), comparing the result with that of Iphis (9.666-797) says: "The transformation of the statue is not only the triumph of art over nature but also of piety over moral failure and crime. The parallelism with Iphis is clear. What moves the two goddesses (Isis, Venus) in each case is a respect for virtuous love. Both Iphis and Pygmalion oppose an evil reality; so the divine powers reward them with the ideal, the miracle" (p.192). However, such readings fail to take note of the broader picture. They ignore the fact that even in Ovid's world, such results are far from certain. Venus' intervention is not presented as probable or even likely. Rather, it is in itself a lucky chance.

This is revealed by two factors. The first is the parenthetical statement "for golden Venus herself was present at her feast" "*ut ipsa suis aderat Venus aurea festis*" (10.277). By calling attention to the fact that the goddess happened to be present to hear the prayers at her altar at her sacred festival, it is suggested that her presence at such an event was not necessarily to be relied upon. This is reinforced by the fact that this tale is being told by Orpheus, whose own story was introduced with the conspicuous absence of a favourable deity at his marriage (10.1-7), although he was the priest of Dionysus and son of both Apollo and one of the Muses.

²⁶ Orpheus ends up being stoned and torn to pieces by the women he spurned, and his art, which has greater power over man, beast and nature than that of Pygmalion (consistent with the fact that he is the son of the god Apollo) is only able to ward off his negative fate temporarily.

Secondly, when Venus rewards Pygmalion, it is not clearly specified why she rewards him – something we would normally expect in such a situation.²⁷ Given that she has just been depicted punishing those who defy her power – and the power of the divine in general – his acknowledgement of such power may have attracted her beneficence. However, Pygmalion has recently acted in a strange, emotionally-motivated and in a sense perverse manner, and what he wants and what he prays for are not only depicted as physical impossibilities, but also natural impossibilities (we have already been told that the kind of women he wants is beyond anything of mortal born). The fact that the goddess grants these prayers suggests that if a happy ending does stem in any way from his behaviour, the reward that follows is either in spite of his irrationality, or because of it.²⁸ Venus is the goddess responsible for love, which in this story (and consistently elsewhere in Ovid) is presented as irrational, and it is consistent that the goddess of irrationality should (every now and then) reward someone for their irrational actions.²⁹ However, given that we have predominantly seen irrationality and emotion-based action as leading logically to death, destruction, misery and failure, and the gods have been presented as capricious and inconsistent in rewarding even pious prayers, such reward as Pygmalion received for such action cannot be relied upon. It is in fact a chance occurrence.

We have identified the reasons why Pygmalion, drawn as moral, an idealist, and as having prodigious artistic skill, but who nevertheless acts totally irrationally and even perversely when carried away by emotion, ends up gaining that which he values most, but as an unexpected gift from a god. We may now state the themes made explicit from these results. Firstly, we see that irrespective of his virtues and attempts at self-separation from the realms of emotion, man will always be susceptible to his emotions and thus be prone to irrationality. Thus the presence of a mind-body dichotomy in man is an explicit theme. Nevertheless, while emotion and irrationality usually lead away from happiness, even emotionally originated,

²⁷ Compare the way in which the cause for the heeding of prayers made to gods is stated explicitly in the vast majority of the examples given above in *Ceres* n.49.

²⁸ As Tissol (1997), p.80, n.127, commenting on Montaigne's summary of the Pygmalion story in the essay '*On the Affection of Fathers for Their Children*,' notes, Montaigne "characterises Pygmalion's tale as a wish-fulfilment story, calling attention to the fact that transformation here results from divine intervention, not artistic genius. Only by special pleading can Pygmalion sustain his burden as archetypal artist: he is more like the lottery winner of modern times, who through pure accident receives a large reward for having made a poor investment."

²⁹ Glenn (1986) observes the uniqueness of Pygmalion's successful situation "it takes an artist plus a tender, devoted lover plus a pious male and a miracle to produce one pure and loving wife" (p.138). The story of Iphis (mentioned by Otis, 1970, above) is similar, it takes a pure and loving youth, a woman who will disobey her husband on account of her child, *and* the fortunate intervention of a divinity, to bring about a seemingly impossible ending.

irrational values, sought under normally impossible circumstances, can be brought about through the intervention of the gods, who even have power over nature itself. However, given the capricious nature of the gods, this, while aided by piety, cannot be relied upon, and is in reality only a chance occurrence of finding the gods present and favourably disposed.³⁰

A note should at this point be made on the story of the Propoetides and how it – although largely separate from that of Pygmalion – is still related in theme and in this way deliberately contrasted with that of Pygmalion. Present in this story are the ideas of the metaphysical superiority of the goddess of love and the power of love over both mortals, of the gods over nature itself, and the theme of impiety being punished. Apart from the fact that one story leads into the other, there are a number of ways in which the similarities of the two tales and thus their thematic relationships are highlighted. For example, “numen” is used in both stories (10.239 and 10.278) to emphasise that it is Venus’ power which is directly responsible for the respective transformations and thus the outcomes of each. Other links come by contrast. In the tale of the Propoetides, Venus is unfavourable towards the impious, and she effects the transformation from the animate to the inanimate. Also, the Propoetides deny Venus to be a divinity “*Venerem... ausae/ esse negare deam*” (10.238-9), and thus fail to understand its/her power over themselves. As Fränkel (1956) noted, “When the women refused to acknowledge that love is divine, the deity of love caused them to go all the way and practice their unbelief” (p.93). In the story of Pygmalion, the inverse of all of these things is true. Additionally, at 10.293, Pygmalion’s woman blushes at being seen in the nude, whereas the Propoetides did not as they had no shame. Note the words used of the Propoetides: they were turned to stone as the blood left their faces as their shame “*pudor*” died down. That is, they became less than human, in fact inanimate, for when their shame left them, so did their blood which makes them alive – which should normally rush to their faces with shame – “*sanguisque induruit oris.*” The words “with little difference” “*parvo... discrimine*” means that they were not so far from hard stone when they were transformed.

³⁰ As implied in 4. *Characterisation*, these themes obviously differ from those which Orpheus intended. If only the parallels between this story and that of Orpheus were considered – which are clearly the points that Orpheus wants to make – and it were assumed that these had a direct relationship to its resolution, we could undoubtedly come up numerous themes (e.g. “a man can be happy in love even without loving a woman”) which would be consistent with Orpheus’ apparent motives for telling the stories he does, although not strictly accurate given what we have seen from the above analysis of what happens in the story, why it does so, and how it is presented. Here we have an excellent example of how we can differentiate between Ovid and one of his internal narrators, and particularly, how Ovid intends us to do so (see *Ceres*, 1. *Introduction*).

The story of the Cerastae is similarly related, although not as closely. As Anderson (1992) notes on these passages, we find the punishment for impiety towards the gods in a manner comparable to that of the Propoetides. While the latter were punished for spurning Venus by being made to use their bodies in a physical yet unemotional way (i.e. not the way of Venus),³¹ the Cerastae are made to be the kind of animals that would be piously sacrificed by normal people, as they made normal people into abnormal and impious sacrificial animals. In both cases, the punishment fits the crime, in that the impious are made to practice what they preach, only more personally and more consistently than they themselves had done.

Thus the characters, actions, and results of both these stories serve to emphasise much of what is thematically explicit in that of *Pygmalion*, although this is achieved largely through contrast and the use of opposites.³²

6. Overall Philosophical Outlook

Although this is an atypical story for the *Metamorphoses*, the philosophical ideas that can be shown to underpin it are nevertheless consistent with what we have already observed. In the character and actions of Pygmalion, we see the presence of the inherent mind-body dichotomy which forms part of his metaphysical nature. This takes the form of reason v. emotion. We see this in Pygmalion's feelings in response to the actions of the Propoetides, which, although presented as just and rational, are followed by the irrational non-sequitur that all women are like this. We also see this in his supposedly moral abstinence from physical relationships with women, which nevertheless results in his succumbing to the physical form of an inanimate representation of a woman. The fact that Pygmalion has a passion for and proceeds to act towards his statue as if it were a real, responsive lover, when he consciously knows that it is not so, emphasises the opposition contained within this dichotomy. These last two points in combination show that emotion is tied to the physical, and its influence will not

³¹ Fränkel (1956) put it thus: "When the women refused to acknowledge that love is divine, the deity of love caused them to go all the way and practice their unbelief" (p.93).

³² All three of these stories in turn help emphasise that which is present in the story of Orpheus. As Galinsky (1975), concluded, "Because of their brevity, *Cerastae* and *Propoetides* have mostly the function of introducing other stories, but they also reinforce the themes of merited punishment and depraved *libido* which contrast with Orpheus' situation. The Propoetides were transformed into hard stone, *rigidus silex* (10.242). Orpheus can move stone by the power of his song (11.10-13), and *rigidi silices* mourn him when he is dead (11.45)" (p.90).

be dispelled even by the attempt at conscious separation from it. Thus even Pygmalion, the good and successful “*heros*,” who is arguably presented as explicitly positively as any of the *Metamorphoses*’ characters,³³ for all his virtues, is still subject to emotions which are not reconcilable with reason, and is thus rationally fallible on account of his inherent and irreconcilable dichotomy. The efficacy of his mind is limited by the presence of emotion which has an irrational base, and about which he can do nothing.

Once again this brings up the idea of determinism; Pygmalion’s values and desires are not consciously chosen or in tune with his reason. The influence of determining agencies not related to character, choice, or action, is further shown through the role of Venus. It is presented clearly that it is she who has the final say in Pygmalion’s destiny. The fact that Pygmalion’s destiny is out of his hands is emphasised by the fact that Venus’ presence is presented as a chance occurrence, and from what we have seen in other stories with regard to the gods’ capricious nature, so is her choice to do so. In sum, while Pygmalion achieves success and happiness through Venus’ intervention, and it is implied that his irrationality actually contributed to this, such characteristics, which have elsewhere been predominantly painted in a negative light, are not presented as *necessarily* bringing about such an ending.

An obvious corollary to the above is the superiority of gods over men, particularly in their ability to deal with or alter the physical aspect of reality. This is also found in the stories of the Cerastae and the Propoetides. In the latter, we also see the power of Venus over the choices and emotions of mortals. It is specifically stated that she caused them to become prostitutes (10.239-40). Stemming from this is the idea that gods are keenly concerned with how they are treated by mortals. Venus explicitly punishes those who do not venerate her (or in the case of the Cerastae, the gods in general), acknowledge her power, and submit to her force (love). He that does all of these things is rewarded.

Once again in this story, in comparison to those of the Cerastae and the Propoetides, there is a clear distinction between virtue and vice, between the proper and the improper. However, virtue is presented as only a chance aid to Pygmalion’s fate. This implies the already noted implication of the impotence of moral virtue. The impotence of virtue itself is further

³³ He can be compared to others such as the title characters of the stories of: *Deucalion & Pyrrha*, *Philemon & Baucis*, *Ceyx*, and *Cipus*, all of whom are presented positively largely on account of the aspects of their behavior that are presented as in-accord with what is presented as intrinsically moral. For example: self-sacrifice; piety; duty to family, country, and the gods. This further singles Pygmalion out as different and emphasises the chance nature of his positive ending.

suggested by the fact that, as with the story of Meleager and the other hunters of the Calydonian boar, the flaws of the supposed “hero” of this story are exposed. On the surface – as is consistent with the internal narrator’s character and purpose in telling this tale – Pygmalion is good, moral, pure, but it is subtly pointed out that Pygmalion acts irrationally. His reasons for his decisions are not always praiseworthy (such as his assumption that all women are like the Propoetides) and his desires are not only in conflict with reality, but perverse.

Summary

Summing up, once again in this story we find a number of philosophical ideas which have already been observed as forming part of the philosophical outlook inherent in the *Metamorphoses*. These include: the presence in characters of an inherent dichotomy between mind and body (reason and emotion); the superiority of gods over mortals in terms of their metaphysical efficacy; and the likelihood of impiety to the gods being punished and the possibility of piety being rewarded – under the right circumstances. Also present is the idea of determinism, which is not only present in the above but also in the fact that although the main character’s fate is depicted as deserved by his morals and values, it is not presented as a logical result of these.³⁴ We also see evidence that this story conforms with the presentation

³⁴ There are numerous cases within the *Metamorphoses* in which characters meet positive occurrences and fates which, while seemingly deserved, clearly do not stem from their characters, actions, or morality. We have already touched upon this subject – particularly in *Ceres* and *Scylla* – and the examples of *Philemon & Baucis*, and *Deucalion & Pyrrha* are discussed in *Synthesis & Conclusions*. Even better test cases come from the treatment of the poem’s various apotheoses. The fates of these characters are most unequivocally positive and seemingly deserved, and may be assumed to be purely consequential results of piety or, more broadly, virtue according to an intrinsicist code. However, excluding the cases of *Glaucus* (13.916-65) and *Hippolytus-Virbius* (15.531-46) (the circumstances of whose transformations are also not fully explained), and those of Augustus and Ovid (which are very likely deliberately inserted for propagandistic and metapoetic reasons, and so treating them as consistent with the rest of the poem would only be a hindrance to finding the poem’s inherent outlook) none of the *Metamorphoses*’ apotheoses can be used as firm evidence for a logical link between supposedly virtuous action, and the positive ends that these characters meet. The following is a brief summary of these.

In the first two case we meet, those of *Io* (1.747), and *Callisto & Arcus* (2.505-7), divinity is achieved not on account of especial piety or morality, but purely through the chance factor of Juppiter’s fondness for these characters, combined with his pity for what has happened to them on his account. *Ino & Melicertes* (4.531-42) escape death through apotheosis brought about by a chance relationship with Venus. In the case of *Ariadne* (8.176-82), again this apotheosis occurs through chance – Bacchus saw and loved Ariadne and gave her deification – exactly why is not specified, though one thing obviously not said is that it was as a logical reward for her good character or moral thoughts and actions. In *Hercules*’ case (Book 9), as both Stephens (1957), p.35, and Due (1974) observe, this apotheosis is not a reward, but part of divine politics. Indeed, it is simply “...brought about by a divine political manoeuvre” (Due, p.85). *Acis* (13.885-97) is transformed by his lover

of moral virtue and of virtue itself as impotent in bringing about success in the pursuit of one's values or happiness in life. Finally, we have seen that irrationality and emotion-based action, while presented in other stories in a negative light and depicted as normally leading to negative outcomes, can still turn out well if the gods, who are capricious and have superiority over both man and the metaphysical nature of the universe, wish it.

Galatea as the only way to save him from death. Even the Roman apotheoses – those of *Aeneas*, *Romulus & Hersilia*, and Julius Caesar show the same thing: *Romulus* (14.823-8) is presented as pious, dutiful and thoroughly good, but the reference to the transformation being on account of a long-standing agreement between Juppiter and Mars somewhat undercuts the idea that this story has a moral result. Also, as with the apotheoses of Ino & Melicertes, and Hercules, Romulus' divine ancestry is a significant factor in his divine fate. *Hersilia's* apotheosis (14.845-51) seems to come from a rare instance of Juno's benevolence, and if there is any moral dimension, it is that of Romulus who effects her deification. In the case of *Julius Caesar*, the deification is in retrospect (15.745-61, 816ff), as the gods and Fates determined that Augustus' character and accomplishments would require a father (although adoptive) of such stature. As Due (1974) observes, Caesar's deification is thus undercut: "The statement that it was not Caesar's deeds in war and peace that elevated him to divinity but his son is literally true; everybody knew that Augustus had made his father a god" (p.86). In effect his reward comes through Augustus' future character, stature, piety, and like Romulus, the idea that he is merely being deified because it has been determined in advance by superior powers – not as a result of deeds done or morals held – takes the edge off the idea that this might be a moral result. *Aeneas'* case (14.581-608) is the most convincing, especially given the fact that we are given many statements affirming and actions demonstrating his piety, and explicit statements that his virtue and piety bring him success in his endeavours. For example, when Aeneas asks the Sibyl of Cumae whether he can go and see his father, she replies "No path is impassable to virtue" "*in via virtuti nulla est via*" (14.113). Similarly, we are told (14.581ff) that Aeneas' virtue (i.e. piety and blind obedience to divine mandates) had compelled the gods to end their ancient rage (see Stephens, 1957, p.104). However, Due (1974) again finds politics in Aeneas' deification, saying, I think rightly, that the "the decision to make him a god... is not made in a *concilium deorum* but results from 'private' lobbying and family protection. Aeneas had now reached the suitable age for obtaining the honour of deification, he is 'ripe' for it, *tempestivus caelo* (113), and Venus had secured the active or passive support of the gods by a campaign..." (p.85). Thus, although piety is said (and certainly seems) to help, it is not necessarily what brings about deification, rather, it merely qualifies one for such an occurrence – if one happens to have a persuasive goddess as a mother.

For the *Metamorphoses'* apotheoses, including those not discussed in detail above, see Wheeler (2000), p.139; Solodow (1988), pp.191-92; Theodorakopoulos (1999), p.152; Davis (1980), pp.125-27; Barkan (1986), pp.82-85; Stephens (1957), p.101; Feeney (1991), pp.205-20; and Schmidt (1991), pp.129-30, 133-38.

Chapter 7 – Synthesis & Conclusions

At the beginning of this thesis two issues were raised for discussion. One was the nature of the philosophical outlook on life (view of the universe and the individual's relation to it) implied by the text of the *Metamorphoses* which is necessarily inherent in it to allow the great variety of stories it contains to exist as they do. The other was the kind of sense-of-life (underlying implicit estimate of, attitude towards and feeling about existence) implied by the ideas which comprise this philosophical outlook.

To tackle this problem we examined six of the poem's stories, selected to represent, to the greatest possible extent, the majority of the poem's stories, given the size and depth of this analysis. The material contained within the stories analysed covers a lot of ground. As an example, we may list: different types of character (gods, morals, men, women, heroes and lovers, the strong-willed, the passive, the emotional, the obedient, and the rational – at least in intent); different kinds of values pursued by these characters (selfish, emotionalistic, dutiful, altruistic); varying situations and contexts in which these values are pursued (we have examined stories about secluded individuals, pairs, groups, and events on a world scale, contexts of battle and hunt, nocturnal meetings between lovers, isolated seclusion, world-scale searches and actions in which superior powers were involved); differences in the kinds of motivations associated with these characters' choices and actions (both the pursuit of physical or tangible values and the upholding of moral principles or abstract ideas); the different types of epistemological approach to morality held by the characters that determine the moral code by which they act – or not as the case may be – and with which their respective morals and values are associated (the intrinsic, subjective, and mixed approaches); the different fates of characters (tragic, happy, untold, deserved and undeserved); the reasons for these fates (logical or by chance); the different treatments by internal narrator and other characters of these fates (positive, negative or indifferent); and the humorous or serious treatment of such fates. The stories analysed also contained different kinds of narrators (overall narrating voice and internal narrators); different lengths of story – some with interruptions of tangential or digressional stories and some without; and were presented in

styles reminiscent of different genres (tragedy, epic, elegy and a mixture).

To each of these stories was applied an inductive methodology of investigation: starting with observations about conflict, plot-development, characterisation; then inducing from the results of these conflicts the themes that are made explicit by the treatment of the story's characters, their actions, their results and the reasons for these; and finally identifying the philosophical ideas implied that are necessary to underpin these themes.¹

Through these six analyses, we have been able to shed light on numerous aspects of the philosophical outlook inherent in the text, and in the following pages I intend to summarise these aspects; how we have come to know them; and demonstrate in the process that these elements imply and are consistent with one another, and when drawn together form an integrated, non-contradictory whole. In doing so, I will show how these implicit ideas (particularly in the realms of metaphysics, epistemology and ethics) help explain a number of the poem's facets which, on the surface, appear problematic to interpretation, whether because of their seeming incongruity, their inconsistency, or their contradictory nature. These explanations will enable a better understanding and interpretation of the text as a whole than has previously been possible, and allow us to identify and define the sense-of-life that the poem's philosophical outlook implies and engenders.

Among the aspects that the results of the above analyses can help us understand are: why certain morals and values, the moral codes with which they are associated, and the epistemological approaches from which these stem, are explicitly treated in different ways (i.e. some positive, some negative) through various factors within the poem, yet are implicitly depicted as leading to, or coming to, the same – usually negative – results; why there often seems to be an amoral treatment of the stories' events; and why both free-will and long-term determinism (predestiny) are clearly present in different stories, and occasionally even in the same ones. In turn, the explanation of these issues helps the understanding of the poem's use of humour, which often appears (clearly deliberately) in seemingly incongruous situations, undercuts characters (including the gods) depicted as virtuous, heroic, admirable, or to be sympathised with on some account, and – combined with the use of seemingly incongruous facts and digressions – often spoils the poem's most dramatic, tragic, and pathetic moments;

¹ By this I do not mean that Ovid is either deliberately didactic or explicitly promoting a moral or philosophical idea; merely that the way in which the thematic content of the text is handled, implies certain philosophical ideas which are fundamental to its themes' existence and manner of treatment.

the seeming treatment of suffering with indifference throughout the poem; and the lack of depth of characterisation found in Ovid's stories.

However, let us use as our starting point the details of how the different epistemological approaches to morality are portrayed, and why each is associated with certain morals and values; particularly, why characters who attempt to use reason all end up acting according to their emotions and pursuing self-interested morals and values, and why characters acting upon a seemingly intrinsic approach to morality act on selfless morals and values.

Intrinsic approach to morality

Throughout the poem, we have seen characters acting according to what can be described as an intrinsic approach to morality. These characters act as if there is a definite moral code by which their lives should be guided; one that tells them what is moral, right and true, and to whom or what one has a duty. Moreover, they appear to hold that what is moral, right and true is intrinsically so, and therefore only *may* be in accord with what one can derive from observation of perceptual reality and the facts of life. Consequently, knowledge of what is intrinsic cannot be reliably determined independently – by the use of reason (because reason only works for the parts of the universe that are governed by logical principles and can therefore be understood through them) – but must be either innate, self-evident, or derived from authorities. For some characters, what they hold as the ultimate source of such a morality is clear, such as the gods or the Fates (as we saw stated openly and portrayed in action in the group of stories contained within the song of Calliope). For others, who appear to act according to a fixed moral code but not one chosen independently, no firm evidence is given as to how they come to hold as intrinsic the principles upon which they act (e.g. Althaea and Phoebus – when not overcome by emotion).

Regardless of its source, since certain morals, values, actions are intrinsically right, moral, and true, then they are to be followed, pursued, and carried out regardless of the context of the situation, the potential consequences, or the potential reward or punishment of those involved – including themselves (both Phoebus and Althaea are again examples). This is a logical sequitur of the idea that the intrinsic is unable to be induced from reality and is therefore, by definition, not entirely rational or consistent. Consequences and context are

factors which relate to the world of logic, and cause and effect. Since morality is not, in this view, restricted by these, there is no need to take such things into consideration.

In addition, all of the characters who appear to treat morality as intrinsic hold the same sort of moral principles and pursue the same sorts of values; ones based around selflessness and duty, and which take precedence over personal values.² For example, in the story of *Phaethon*, morals and values implied to be intrinsic include: a father's paternal obligations to his son; and one's duty to keep one's word once given. Both the necessity of obeying one's superiors, and the virtue of sacrificing personal values to others are also implied. In *Ceres*, an intrinsic value for family members is again implied, as is fear, obedience and worship of divinities. In *Scylla*, duty to fatherland, family, city and citizens is presented as intrinsically moral. In *Meleager*, it is duty to family, and reverence to the gods. Such morals and values are, as we have seen, usually presented by contrast with others in the same story or those surrounding them (for different types of contrast, see the contrast in language in *Scylla*, the contrast between characters in *Meleager*, and *Pygmalion* in relation to those stories surrounding it), and are consistent with those depicted by the narrator (who promotes intrinsic morals and values) in a positive light.³

The link between the intrinsic approach to morality and selflessness, duty, and reverence for the divine is a purely logical one. The very fact that one draws what is moral from some higher or external force about which one knows nothing (and yet which one trusts implicitly for whatever reason), implies a denial of one's own efficacy in being able to think and act justly – or at least *as* justly – without it, and a denial of the competence of one's mind in comparison to something or someone else's. This corresponds to values. If one does not value oneself and one's abilities or self-worth, then it is perfectly consistent that one should sacrifice one's self and one's values for others, and both pay obeisance to and set store by the decrees of higher powers such as the gods.

² And, as we have already observed, those presented in the *Metamorphoses* to be predominantly typically Roman ones. See *Phaethon* n.66.

³ This is accomplished either through explicit statements, or implicit (but clearly deliberate) comparison in the language used – for example, the use of the same words by characters from opposing moralities and relating to different morals and values, and the juxtaposition of words which would normally be associated, but which in fact highlight an opposite. We have seen both most clearly in *Scylla* and *Meleager*. See also Holzberg (2002), p.116.

Mixed approach to morality

In contrast to the intrinsic, although in some ways related to it, is that which I have labelled the mixed approach to morality. This is present in the form of characters who do not act upon impulse alone (to whom conscious thought and reasoning is evident), whose words and actions show that they are, as with those who hold an intrinsic approach, aware of their actions, and the issue of morality, but who attempt to determine and validate the moral code underpinning their choices, values and actions *independently*. That is, without reference to and often in spite of that which is depicted as intrinsic. Examples we have seen of such characters include: Scylla, Meleager, Toxeus and Plexippus, Pyramus & Thisbe, and Pygmalion. As we have seen, such characters, because they hold to the efficacy of their own independent choices and actions' justness and efficacy, are confident in their own abilities to think and act correctly. These characters' independence is often emphasised in being presented as predominantly selfish, more self-righteous, self-sustaining, and as having greater self-esteem, confidence and pride in their own abilities than characters who treat morality as intrinsic. These attributes are often accompanied by a particularly unyielding mental resolve.

Understandably then, the morals and values associated with this approach predominantly coincide with what characters perceive as in their own self-interest and matters of personal importance – and in agreement with their emotions. The characters who hold them often bring themselves into conflict with the morals and values associated with the intrinsicist approach and the authorities by which these are known, such as the gods and their representatives. Such characters are particularly prone to personal passion and impiety.

In these characters and their actions, we also see that a link between emotions and desire for physical fulfilment, action, and success is to be expected, and a link between emotions and that which is selfish as a hard and fast rule. Throughout the *Metamorphoses* those who act selfishly are predominantly influenced by emotion at some level, and vice versa.⁴

These links are interesting in that there are several philosophical ideas implicit within the text that work to explain and directly bear upon them. Firstly, the link between selfishness,

⁴ Even characters who hold an intrinsic approach express the latter link. For example Althaea – who is torn by emotion in her decision making – also acts in a self-interested way in that she holds her own personal morality above the wellbeing of her family members. She considers that this is what matters, and it is after choosing the death of Meleager and realising the wider significance of her deed (8.531-2), that she punishes herself accordingly with death.

emotion, and independence can be explained by an idea present throughout the poem: the depiction of the very metaphysical makeup of the individual characters as containing an inherent dichotomy between mind and body (reason and emotion). Characters such as Scylla, Althaea, Pyramus, Pygmalion, are all representative of this in some way: they are comprised of two halves, a rational side (the mental), and an emotional side (associated with the physical),⁵ both of which point in opposite directions and neither of which is reconcilable with the other. In other characters, such as Phaethon, we see only one side of the dichotomy – the emotional side, which opposes reason. Again others, such as Phoebus and Ceres also embody this idea, acting according to conscious decisions when they are not overcome by emotion, and yet irrationally when they are.

Due to the irreconcilable nature of this dichotomy, one's attempt to use reason will always be incompatible with one's emotions. As reason is key to helping one choose how to pursue that which is of value then, conversely, if that which is of value is unchosen and/or irrational, then reason will always be subverted by one's emotions. Thus characters who attempt to use reason unanimously end up acting according to their emotions and pursuing self-interested morals and values. They are often blind to the most obvious facts of reality and consequences – as they are to their own emotions – and likely to oppose those duties and values portrayed as intrinsic. Scylla is a case in point. She does her best to use reason, but since she has already been overcome by emotion which has no rational explanation, it turns out to be merely deductive rationalisation.

This brings up another philosophical implication – that emotions and passions are incomprehensible, as they have no particular cause.⁶ They are in effect depicted as primaries – they do not presuppose value-judgments or choice of values but rather, are their progenitors. They are thus outside the individual's sphere of understanding or influence. This is the case with both gods and men – and is emphasised through the prominence in the poem of Venus' employment of her amatory power. She can and does, at will, on a regular basis, cause emotions that are not related to conscious thought or reason in any way, that are consequently unintelligible to it, and are by definition opposed to it. This is both understandable and logical given the presentation of the individual character as having an inherent and irreconcilable mind/body dichotomy.

⁵ This is even more starkly emphasised in the apotheoses stories. See Wheeler (2000), p.150.

⁶ See Galinsky (1975), p.57 with particular regard to Narcissus.

Subjective approach to morality

The case is similar to the subjective approach to morality. Characters with the subjective approach show no awareness of the issue of morality, and do not appear to act on any code of set moral principles. They seem to be ruled merely by the emotions of the moment, and make choices and commit actions according to whatever seems beneficial for themselves at any given time (e.g. consistent emotionalists like Phaethon and part-time emotionalists such as Phoebus and Ceres). These characters have no consciously determined or chosen reasons for holding the values they pursue, and these values and the methods used to pursue them have no limits or restrictions. Because of this they, like those who approach morality as intrinsic, choose and act upon their morals and ethics without thought for consequences or the context.

As with the morals and values of those who have a mixed approach to morality, those of the subjective characters are universally presented as being self-centred, with no regard for that which is presented as intrinsic or of reason. Indeed, even a cursory glance reveals that when a character acts on emotion alone, their very faculty of judgment is concurrently nullified.

Thus we can see that the two non-intrinsic approaches are in many ways alike. As a broad principle, self-interest and personal values – judgement of something as of personal importance – being equated with emotion, are treated as by nature non-objective, and are inherently distortive factors in appraising a situation. In comparison, this helps highlight why the intrinsic approach – being a submission of the mind to something external and thus largely avoiding emotion – is not.

One aspect of the *Metamorphoses* that can be better understood in light of the above presentations is the oft-noted lack of depth of characterisation apparent for many figures (discussed already, particularly with regard to the characters of Phaethon, Scylla, and Althaea).⁷ This is in fact a corollary to the metaphysics of the world Ovid presents. In the cases of the characters who hold the subjective and mixed approaches to morality, because emotions are primaries from which their value-judgements and motivations for choices and actions stem, there is understandably no deeper psychological introspection portrayed, since

⁷ For instance, Glenn (1986) observes that both gods and men in the *Metamorphoses* often seem to be represented more like personifications of ideas than individual characters (p.11) – an idea agreed with to an extent by Stephens (1957), p.84. See also Solodow (1988), pp.132, and 155-6; and Wheeler (2000). On the other hand, some scholars, such as Galinsky (1975) praise Ovid's characterisation, while seemingly failing to observe its lack of depth (e.g. pp.49ff). Likewise consider Holzberg (2002), pp.x, 118, 151.

there is no evidence that such a thing exists. Similarly, for those who choose to follow that which is intrinsically mandated as of value, good, moral and just, no deeper motivations for their choices and actions are necessary, as they merely accept already formed premises upon which to act. Thus even characters like Scylla and Althaea, who are painfully torn by inner conflicts and in whose cases we would most likely see evidence for such deeper psychological characterisation, only express what is going on psychologically down to the level at which the premises upon which they act seem to begin. In Scylla's case, it is unchosen emotions with no deeper roots to identify and in Althaea's, it is duties which are accepted as intrinsically just, without any more fundamental reasoning.

Determinism

A concept which follows from the above that is crucial to the underpinning philosophical ideas of the *Metamorphoses*, is that of determinism – the idea that success or happiness in life, or the ultimate choices, actions, emotions, character, or fate of the individual (whether man or god) is determined by factors (whether internal or external) beyond their control. This concept is present in several forms throughout the poem, and all of these, as we shall see, have wider ramifications.

The internal determining factor has already been alluded to above. If one's emotions are primaries and irreconcilable with one's reason (because of a character's inherent mind-body dichotomy), then one's values and subsequent choices and actions are likely to be influenced by emotion and ultimately outside one's control. Even if one does have the use of reason and will power to sufficient extent to be able to ignore one's emotions (a possibility implied in the holding of an intrinsic approach to morality), then what one does will not be (at least by choice) in accord with one's emotions, and one's success and happiness in life will still be out of one's hands.⁸ This explains why scholars such as Glenn (1986) observe that the *Metamorphoses'* characters "seem to be largely fated to be right or wrong, pious or impious, loving or hurtful" (p.82), and do not really direct their own destinies. This applies to gods as well as mortals. Both are depicted as subject to the same inner dichotomy and prone to acting on emotions outside their understanding or control. Hence they act capriciously, irrationally,

⁸ Emotional paralysis like that of Vergil's Aeneas is therefore a theoretical potential.

and in consequence immorally and unjustly.⁹ In this regard, as Otis (1970) notes, the gods are in fact “only thinly-disguised men and women” (p.145). The susceptibility of the gods to emotion is emphasised by their frequent indulgence in and even completely succumbing to *amor*, the “*maximus... deus*” (7.55) found throughout the poem (discussed in *Ceres*).¹⁰

Nevertheless, the significance of the gods as major players in the universe of the *Metamorphoses* should not be overly downplayed. They have far greater mastery over nature than man and are often able to change the laws of reality itself. They are in effect presented as being part of a supernatural dimension, one not subject to the laws of nature and metaphysics perceivable to and understandable by mortals.¹¹ Their significance is emphasised by their appearing to be primarily concerned with man’s views of his relationship to them

⁹ See Segal (1969a) pp.86-7.

¹⁰ As Stephens (1957) states, throughout the poem Ovid “is careful to make Venus and Cupid supreme” (p.109). Note that Venus, as a divinity personifying the emotion of love, works as both an internal and external determining factor in the lives of the individual character, whether god or man. On the humanising of the gods see also Newlands (2005), pp.485-6; Galinsky (1975), pp.162-75; Bernbeck (1967), pp.80-94; Barchiesi (1999), p.112; and more generally Otis (1970) and Solodow (1988). For a slightly different sentiment, see Albrecht (1999), who writes “The great emphasis which Ovid places on the power of the goddess [Minerva, in the story of Arachne] is, no doubt, explained by the political climate of his own times... Nevertheless, in criticising this hierarchical order, Ovid does not revolt; he does not question the power of the gods” (p.164); and Due (1974), p.88, who seems to put Ovid’s ignominy of the gods down to inability.

¹¹ We see this concretised in the *Creation* story (1.5-88), in which it is told how a divine power effectively laid out the rules of the universe’s metaphysical nature. In addition, apart from the facilitation of a myriad of fantastic physical transformations of some form of life into both other forms of it and into inanimate objects, the nature of the relationship between the gods and reality is prominently emphasised in the instances where the gods interfere on man’s behalf to alter reality. Take for example, the stories of: *Iphis* (9.666-797), in which the gods facilitate changes in characters’ metaphysical natures; *Orpheus & Eurydice* (10.1-85) in which the gods are persuaded to bring the dead back to life; and *Ceyx & Alcyone* (11.410-748), in which the gods change the dead Ceyx into an unquestionably live bird. To these can be added the apotheosis stories, in which gods bring about the change from mortal to immortal (see *Pygmalion* n.34).

Nevertheless, the most significant statement of the nature of this relationship is found in the poem’s Proem:

My spirit/mind impels me to speak of forms changed into new
bodies; gods, breathe on my beginnings (for this too you
have changed) and lead down from the first origin of
the world to my own times a perpetual song.
In nova fert animus mutatas dicere formas
corpora; di, coeptis (nam vos mutastis et illa)
adspirate meis primaque ab origine mundi
ad mea perpetuum deducite tempora carmen. (1.1-4)

I do not take “*et illa*” to denote that the gods have changed “even my beginnings” (as well as those of other authors before) as Anderson (1997) takes it, but the beginnings of this poem as well as the forms mentioned in line 1, and about which Ovid is going to relate (a reading also offered by Glenn, 1986, p.216). Thus his beginnings become in effect one of the “*formas*” which the gods have changed. With regard to “*formas*” – I follow Anderson in treating it as meaning “what normally gives things identity in the world” (see also Galinsky, 1999, p.105). Note that I follow the reading “*illa*” (with Tarrent, 1982, Anderson, 1997, and Kenney, 1975) instead of “*illas*” in line 2, which although found in all manuscripts, has been argued (I think) conclusively against by Kenney and others. Despite this, for the purpose of my argument, the alternative reading of “*illas*” would make little difference; the meaning then being that the gods are responsible for the changes in form about which Ovid has decided to write. On the proem, see the above scholars and O’Hara (2004-5).

(see *Ceres* and *Meleager*), that is, how they are thought of and treated by lesser beings – as opposed to petty jealousies and rivalries between themselves (thus following a more Hesiodic rather than Homeric model).¹² This brings up another aspect of determinism, the external aspect – here with particular respect to mortals’ destinies.

As far as man is concerned, the gods are omnipotent, capricious, with superhuman power, and very much beyond his comprehension. Accordingly, the gods have the power not only to control man physically, but to alter man’s emotions and values, confound his reason, and negate his moral code.¹³ Thus any struggle of man’s against them, no matter how innocent, rational, just or good, is presented as futile.¹⁴ As one of Ovid’s characters says: “Immense is the power of heaven and has no limit, and whatever the gods wish is accomplished” “*immensa est finemque potentia caeli/ non habet, et quicquid superi voluere, peractum est*” (8.618-9).¹⁵ Additionally, in the case of certain gods whose sphere of influence is particularly associated with influencing man’s emotions (and thus their choices and actions), such as Venus and Dionysus, their concern is just as strongly tied to man’s attitude towards these particular

¹² Relevant to this tradition Due (1974), discussing the “*concilium deorum*” at 1.163-253 and how it is used by Ovid to relate the gods’ interest in their status, says “The usual function of a *concilium deorum* in normal epic poems is to project the human action into the sphere of the gods, who meet in order to decide what is to happen to or between the heroes; the gods may be more or less emotionally involved both as regards sympathies and antipathies, and their prestige in relation to each other is usually a strong motivating force. But they are not affected by what happens in the human sphere in the sense that their own welfare or position as gods is at stake. But that appears to be the situation in Ovid’s general assembly of gods. The question is not so much to make decisions but to be or not to be” (pp.102-3). Rosati (1999), more generally regarding this aspect of the conflict between gods and mortals, summarises: “the mortals refuse to recognise the superiority of the gods, leading inevitably to divine punishment of hubris” (p.240); and we have already seen (both in *Ceres* and *Meleager*) that it is in situations of personal insult and divine punishment and anger that they are most emotional, most excessive, and most severe upon mortals. See also Janan (1988).

¹³ Glenn (1986), pp.216ff, observes that there are a number of causes given for physical change in the *Metamorphoses*, but fails to observe that these are *all* supernatural. For a contrary opinion, see Otis (1970), p.148.

¹⁴ Examples of those who come into conflict with the gods who have truth or innocence on their side, but who nevertheless come to ruin, have already been discussed in *Ceres* 6. *Overall Philosophical outlook*. In a number of these stories, the supremacy of the divine is reinforced through the gods’ punishment of man for conscious disobedience, for the results of his exercising his capacity for independent thought and choice – his fundamental tool of survival. When characters come to their ruin not merely in spite of their ability to think for themselves, but because of it, this faculty is depicted as impotent in comparison to the gods’ power. Thus their fates are as good as sealed when conflict with the gods arises. See also Galinsky (1975), pp.171-2, for Ovid’s treatment of the theme of divine vengeance.

¹⁵ The bibliography on the gods in Ovid is extensive, and I have touched upon it already with respect to several aspects of the divine. For further general works, see: Albrecht (1999) pp.177-96, who notes the limitless aspect of the gods’ power; Newlands (2005) pp.485-90, who discusses both their limitations and their superiority over man; Brown (2005), pp.23ff, and more broadly Galinsky (1975); Otis (1970); Solodow (1988), Little (1970); Wheeler (2000); Barkan (1986); and Bernbeck (1967). For an older, although thorough, review of the literature on the gods in Ovid, see Hofmann (1981), pp.2188-9.

gods' sphere of influence, e.g. love and irrationality.¹⁶ They are not only active in rewarding those who acknowledge their influence, but specifically target those who reject them (e.g. the stories of the *Cerastae* and *Propoetides*).¹⁷ Finally, even if their mandates are followed and obedience and worship given, the fact that they are capricious means that they cannot be relied upon to be just, moral, consistent, or to bring one to a positive fate, either on earth or after death.¹⁸ In noting "Ovid's de-emphasis of the religious and the numinous function of the gods" Galinsky (1975) observes "Frequent as the gods' intervention is in Ovid's poem, he minimises or humanises scenes such as the supplication of them and, even more, their hearing of human prayers or providing spiritual guidance" (p.222).¹⁹

In summary, the gods, like man, are also restricted by forces outside their control, and although they are superior in many ways to mortals, their faults mean that they are neither particularly august, nor omnipotent, all-powerful, or infallible.

Another reason for the gods' fallibility and lack of omnipotence – and thus lack of intelligibility and reliability as far as man is concerned – is the presence and influence of the Fates, whose decrees are immutable (again see particularly the discussions in *Ceres*, as well as *Phaethon* and *Meleager*). They are another external determining factor, that works in a

¹⁶ Regarding Dionysus, whom we have not yet had cause to discuss, Glenn (1986) says he is "the mysterious liberator from the monotony of daily routine. His means are violence, irrational behaviour, and languor" who, on this account, "receives impressive homage" in Book 4 (pp.54-5).

¹⁷ In the cases of Venus and Dionysus this is particularly apt, as one would expect given that the domains of these two gods are particularly associated with influencing these aspects of man. For instance, in the story of *Atalanta & Hippomenes* (10.560-707), on which Stephens (1957) notes that Venus helps those who pray to her, punishes those who neglect her, and "The series of stories that makes up Orpheus' song illustrates one point: the overwhelming power of love. If one respects this power, it will favour him, but one scorns it at his peril" (p.88). Likewise, Glenn (1986) sums up the *Pentheus & Bacchus* story (3.511-733) as follows: "there are divine powers that are identified with religious and cultural trends... they must be recognised and respected; they require sensitivity for their perception; they punish those who do not treat them properly" (p.39). For Venus' role in the *Metamorphoses*, see sources given in: *Ceres*, n.36. For Dionysus, see: Stephens (1957), pp.96-101; Glenn (1986), pp.38-40, 43-5; Armstrong (1989), pp.87-91; and more generally Otto (1981); Evans (1988); Mikalson (2005); and Kerenyi (1976).

¹⁸ As, for example, is suggested by Vergil's depiction of Elysium (*Aen.* 6.636ff). See Galinsky (1975), pp.238ff, who observes the difference between Vergil's world and Ovid's with respect to gods. In Vergil, the supernatural world and that of man is different and uncrossable. In Ovid, the gods are nowhere near as august and supreme. For scholarship on the gods in Vergil, see Feeney (1991), pp.129-87, who gives a good general bibliography on the topic. For a more detailed list, see Suerbaum (1981), pp.62-70, 163-8. For Ovid's generally bleak and rather Homeric depiction of the underworld, see Galinsky (1975), pp.126-7; Burrow (1999), p.275-6; Solodow (1988), pp.148-9; and Stephens (1958b).

¹⁹ See also pp.171-2 and n.28, where he observes: "Ovid de-emphasises and even banalises another traditionally serious theme ... i.e. their hearing of human pleas and prayers." Likewise see Tissol (1997), who observes that "By eliminating prophecy from his version of *Aeneid* 4, Ovid eliminates the most obvious manifestations of divine purpose and the corresponding structure a comprehensibility of events granted by Vergil to his reader. *Aeneid* 6 offers Ovid an opportunity to achieve a similar result, since Vergil in that book again occupies much of our attention with prophetic exposition" (pp.177ff).

different way again – their power being depicted as determining things in advance through one means or another. Importantly, they are portrayed in the *Metamorphoses* – unlike, for example, in Vergil – as acting independently to the gods. They are clearly superior to them – further emphasising the lack of choice or direction of fate of all individuals. This is explicitly stated more than once, and is particularly noteworthy in the speeches of Juppiter (e.g. 5.529-32, 9.428-38, 15.807ff).²⁰

However, it is important to note that the Fates' power, although often said to be the ultimate determining factor behind everything, even above love and the gods, is primarily only *implied* to be so. Such long-term determinism (predestiny) embodied in the Fates' decrees is rarely *stressed*, and the means by which this takes effect is unspecified.²¹ This is quite natural. If such deterministic elements of the *Metamorphoses*' universe were consistently stressed – if it were constantly emphasised that the events were all taking shape in accordance with the will of the Fates or the gods set out long ago – it would strip both men and gods of even the appearance of free-will. They would in effect be automata – beings whose actions and fates would be devoid of meaning because they would not stem from their own characters and choices – and many readers' interest in the story would undoubtedly be lost. As it is, even such an Ovidian enthusiast as Glenn (1986) seems to find the integration of the Fates as somewhat hard to swallow (see pp.202-3).²² Understandably then, characters *are* presented as having some ability of choice throughout the work, and free-choice is even crucial to a number of stories (most significantly in those in which characters consciously choose between opposing duties, morals and values, as in the cases of Scylla and Althaea).²³

²⁰ As Kajanto (1961), observes: in Vergil, "*fatum* is consistently treated as one with the will of the gods" (p.18. See also pp.20-2), and the powers of Juppiter and the Fates are tied and work as one; they are each expressions of each other, two sides of the same coin, both working to bring about that which they destine together (see for example *Aen.* 1.257ff, 10.610-32, 12.725-7). He also observes rightly that Ovid lacks this, not least because he does not give "the expression *fata deum, fata lovis*, which are frequent in Virgil... and which bear testimony on the identification of *fatum* and divine will." Regarding the difference in the treatment of the divine as the motive factor between Ovid and Vergil, see Tissol (1997), pp.177ff. Similarly, see Wheeler (2000), p.27, who observes that early in the poem, Juppiter "plans to destroy the human race with thunderbolts, as though he were fighting another gigantomachy. However, he suddenly becomes afraid of setting the world on fire (1.253-61)... The humour of Jupiter's false start has the effect of exposing the machinery of fate." For a contrary interpretation, see Fränkel (1956), p.92.

²¹ The Fates' physical presence in the *Meleager* story is a rare exception, and there they act in an unusual way, providing a supernatural tool by which Meleager's fate is taken out of his hands. Normally they are not shown as being so personally involved, but are implied (as for instance is the case in Juppiter's speeches) to somehow determine characters' actual choices, actions, values, emotions and ideas in advance.

²² Even Kajanto (1961) does not take Ovid's use of the Fates and other forces of long-term determinism seriously.

²³ See Glenn (1986), p.38.

However, implications of long-term determinism are in fact frequent. Take for example the number of predictions and prophecies given by man and god about fate and the future.²⁴ To this we may add many instances in which the gods' interferences with characters' lives is said to act long-term. Although some gods – like Venus – are predominantly shown doing this actively, the involvement of other gods can be extremely subtle and often unconvincing. For example, in the Calydonian boar-hunt, it is suggested that the events all occurred on account of Diana, and yet the free-will and independent choices of the characters are the focus of Ovid's story.²⁵

Different types of determinism

Here we have a contradiction in the view of metaphysics being presented, one which can nevertheless be understood, although not resolved. We see the combination of two different and conflicting views of how determinism works, and without either of these elements, Ovid's stories would be vastly different. One is the idea held by thinkers as early as *Heraclitus* that everything, including human thought, action and achievement is determined in advance by higher powers, such as fate and the gods.²⁶ Both the narrator and the internal characters who are proved in action as having a true and reliable grasp on the nature of reality (i.e. how the metaphysic and epistemology and ethics of how the *Metamorphoses*' universe works) explicitly state as much (see *Phaethon*, *Ceres*, *Meleager*). The second idea is what we see most often through the events of the stories and the manner of their ultimate outcomes, namely that individuals do in fact have the capacity for independent choice (i.e. free-will), and it is the inherent dichotomy of their own metaphysical makeup together with the existence of superior and capricious powers in the universe beyond their understanding, and with which any metaphysical conflict will be futile, that remove their ability to determine and direct their own fates. Indeed, as noted above, passionate struggles and independent choice are often presented as key factors in many stories. Not only would plot, theme, and characterisation be significantly affected by their removal, but it is through the characters' independent choices and actions that the themes are present, particularly through the choices of the characters who oppose the universe's higher powers. As Glenn (1986) sums up "it is

²⁴ See *Phaethon*, n.60.

²⁵ See Glenn (1986), pp.108-9, and more generally Kajanto (1961).

²⁶ See Nikoletsias (2015), and Patrick (1969). More broadly on pre-Ovidian ideas of determinism, see Whitaker (1996), and Kane (2002). See also Kajanto (1961), and Cicero's *De Fata*.

not clear whether all acts and events are determined by the Fates... The net result is that both fate and freedom from fate are operative” (pp.216-7).

The presence of both ideas so strongly creates an irreconcilable contradiction, and is undoubtedly one of which Ovid was aware. At least implicitly, he seems to have realised that long-term determinism negates free-will, and that this neuters a story in which characterisation is important (as is often the case in the *Metamorphoses*). As a comparison, Vergil’s Aeneas is certainly a far less colourful and individually characterised figure than the vast majority of Ovid’s characters.

It is true that most of the sizeable works of ancient literature written in the epic or tragic genre contain both ideas (long-term determinism and free-will). However, one of the two is usually dominant to such an extent that if it were removed or even significantly toned down, the story’s essentials (plot, theme, characterisation) would all be significantly affected, but with the removal of the other, the main aspects of the plot, theme and characterisation could remain relatively unchanged.

For example, in Sophocles (I refer here particularly to the *Oedipus Tyrannus* and *Antigone* as obvious examples), the idea of long-term determinism is for the most part only peripheral; it is the individual and independent choices of individual characters (rather than long-term influence of the gods or Fates) that are emphasised as at the forefront of making the story turn out as it does, and neither the gods nor characters’ unchosen emotions play a significant part in determining the course of their lives.²⁷ On the other hand in Vergil’s *Aeneid*, the fact that the events are pushed from behind by the gods is indispensable; the individual characters’ free will less so. Even if the characters were both implied and stated explicitly to have free-will, the fact that they choose to follow that which is divinely mandated means that we are not *shown* the potency of this in action. Aeneas the automaton would carry out his actions just as well and with similar meanings, and his character constantly makes explicit statements to that effect (e.g. 1.205-6, 4.340, 6.458-65, 11.112). Similarly, the gods’ constant appearance

²⁷ As, for example Segal (1995) puts it “For all our predilection for regarding the Sophoclean *Oedipus* as a tragedy of fate, in its austere form it is remarkably sparing of direct supernatural intervention” (p.146). On determinism in Sophocles, see Opstelten (1952) pp.74-5, 187-90; Bushnell (1988); and more generally Whitman (1951).

and intervention shows them to be predominantly tools by which this long-term determinism is effected (see for example 1.261-2, 7.310-6, 10.104-13, 12.725-7).²⁸

This is consistent with these authors' presentations of morality. In Sophocles, while there is undoubtedly a caprice at the heart of the universe which brings the characters in his plays to ultimately tragic endings, free-will and independence are crucially important in a moral sense. This can be seen from the fact that much emphasis is placed on the individual's independent choices of what morals and values to uphold, and whether or not they are justified in their manner of pursuing these – something implied as a necessity if one wants a chance at a happy, successful life or ultimately positive fate. Conversely, in Vergil, free-will and independence are shown as tied to emotion and bring ruin. It is in blindly following the gods (an intrinsic moral code) as if one had no free-will that is suggested to allow for a positive fate – even if more likely in the afterlife. In effect, one can submit to divine will, or come to ruin.²⁹

In Ovid, both forms of determinism are present to a significant extent. He seems to want to follow in the Vergilian tradition of having the events turn out according to some form of divine will, and also to want – for the purpose of his stories – to focus on characters, their choices, and therefore needs free-will to be present.³⁰ This suggests that the reason we see both so strongly, is an artistic one. Be that as it may, the combination is present and, for the purposes of this discussion, the important point philosophically is that both parts of it imply the same thing. Whether destiny is pre-determined, or comes more as a moment-by-moment influence from internal or external determining factors, the fates of individuals are out of their hands. Moreover, neither path is depicted as likely to give one a better chance of

²⁸ For scholarship on the gods in Vergil, see above, n.18. Additionally, for a good summation of scholarship on the workings of the Fates in Vergil, see Neri (1986).

²⁹ This is very much in the vein of Seneca (after Cleanthes) "The Fates lead those who are willing, those who are unwilling they drag" "*Ducunt volentem fata, nolentem trahunt*" (Ep. 107.11).

³⁰ We see in several ways that Ovid is somewhat following the Vergilian model in his treatment of long-term determinism. To take just one example, as observed above, Ovid sets down in his proem to write of changes of form from the start of time to his present day, and states that the gods were the unifying factor (as they were the movers of Vergil's plot), and that he ends up with an explicitly Roman conclusion which (as Jupiter explains in the abovementioned references) is all part of a plan concocted by higher powers – as in the *Aeneid*. Moreover, given that the *Aeneid* was, in effect, hot off the press and highly influential at the time of the *Metamorphoses*' composition, and contained a very Roman presentation of the gods, explicitly presenting the age old idea that Fate and the gods determine everything in advance, it would I think be understandable for the elements of long-term determinism present in Ovid's work, to be at least partly influenced by his Vergil. The influence of Vergil on Ovid has often been noted, e.g. (and without listing scholars who compare only specific points between the two) see: Due (1974), pp.68-9; Mack (1988), pp.127ff; Tissol (1997), pp.94-5; Solodow (1988), pp.136ff; Wheeler (2000), pp.123-6; Galinsky (1975), pp.14f, 210ff; and Otis (1970).

survival, happiness, or a positive fate, and both are in fact depicted as likely to *increase* one's chances of the opposite. This, I will show later, implies a malevolent view of the universe which is not present in either Sophocles or Vergil, despite the negative endings of the former and the long-term determinism of the latter.

Explicit and implicit evaluation of the three approaches to morality

This idea of inescapable determinism, and the negative outcomes that result, are consistent with and offer a philosophical explanation of why the three moral codes presented in the text (and the respective morals, values, actions), although explicitly evaluated either positively or negatively, are all implicitly undercut by the text as a whole.

To define terms, I distinguish between the explicit and implicit as follows. The explicit is that which evidence shows to be deliberate on the part of the narrating voice and the internal characters who have a true and reliable grasp of reality. For example, some characters, their choices and actions, morals and values – and by implication their epistemological approach to morality – are evaluated as good and deserving of a positive ending. Some are given a completely opposite evaluation through explicit statements and evidently conscious contrast and comparison (often only by implication) in the language used by the narrator and internal characters (and the characters whose speeches they in turn report). The implicit is what is depicted – by what happens to these character, their morals, and why – to be the whole truth: whether or not a character's morals, choices, actions and values are effective or ineffective in reality; whether the fates that characters meet come because of their approach to morality or through other factors; whether the explicit evaluations of characters and actions are undercut through the use of humour. Let us first give a summary of how the three approaches are explicitly evaluated.

Explicit evaluations

On the whole, the morals, values, and duties linked with the intrinsic approach are praised explicitly by the narrator and indeed many of the characters portrayed as having a true and reliable grasp on reality. Likewise, the morals and values held by them are promoted across

the board. Even in the case of Althaea, although the moral principles she pursues lead her into an impossible situation, they are still presented as just and moral (as opposed to those of other non-intrinsic characters such as Meleager), and it is only the results that stem from them and which contradict other intrinsic morals and values that are criticised. We see this more starkly in the presentation of characters we have not covered in detail, and who hold an intrinsic approach (e.g. Philemon and Baucis – discussed below). This positive representation is emphasised by contrast throughout the poem with the negative representations of the morals and values associated with other approaches.

This positive treatment of a morality stemming from higher powers is consistent with the view of metaphysics we have observed earlier – a view that the universe is one in which a hierarchy of forces exists, greater than and unintelligible to the metaphysically flawed individual. Here, these forces are the gods and Fates, who are metaphysically powerful, and whose decrees must be followed in reality or failure and punishment ensues. They maintain and determine the nature of the universe's metaphysics and control what happens within it. As far as the narrator and internal characters mentioned above are concerned, the intrinsic approach could be thought of as the “reality” approach.

The morals and values associated with the other approaches are treated explicitly negatively, particularly through contrast of language used by the narrator and the positive presentation of intrinsic actions, morals and values given in the same stories. We have seen this in the case of Phaethon, as well as those of the part-time emotionalists, such as Phoebus, Ceres, and Dis, and in the case of the mixed characters, who are portrayed just as negatively, irrespective of how justifiable their choices and actions may seem given the context. For instance Meleager, whose actions seem, given the context, to be a direct and largely understandable result of the situation he has been forced into is, on the whole, given just as negative an evaluation by both the internal characters and narrator as Scylla. Scylla's actions are both far more wide reaching in their immediate consequences and far less defensible as a rational response to the situation – she consciously acts contrary to how she knows she would if not the victim of such passion.

The common denominator between the morals, values, choices and actions of both subjective and mixed characters which leads to an equally explicit negative evaluation is that they pursue personal values and by doing so contravene those presented as intrinsic. Both are

often depicted as coming into conflict with the gods and other figures representing authority as a consequence of their actions.

Implicit evaluations

Now we may turn to the various moralities' implicit evaluations. In the case of the subjective approach, the implicit is largely aligned with the explicit. We are shown in action that the maintaining of a subjective approach to morality is a method of epistemological guidance which is invalid in reality. The code of ethics associated with it – or rather, the lack of one – is likewise ineffective in and even destructive to the achievement of long term success or happiness.

Not only are the characters who act subjectively generally depicted as having negative endings, but key aspects of this approach to morality are often the logical progenitor of these characters' ruin and that of those around them. These are: the ignoring of context in choices and actions; ignoring the potential consequences of the steps one takes to achieve these spur of the moment values; and the fact that such choices and actions go against and neglect the moral duties and values presented as intrinsic – and thus the authorities who represent them. Thus they are equally blind to the reality of the world around them, their own emotions, and that which is intrinsic, and it is only logical that these characters often come into conflict with other of their values, other characters, or with the laws of nature.

Nevertheless, while the subjective approach is as a rule presented as lacking in metaphysical efficacy, and often enticing negative endings, it is important to note that subjective actions, morals, and values are not presented as *necessarily* doomed to negative results. Although we are never given a clear example of this happening (the closest we have seen is the case of Pygmalion), it is theoretically possible as evidenced by the fact that although characters of all three approaches to morality sometimes meet endings which are depicted explicitly as deserved, these often occur not as consequences of their approaches to morality or associated values and morals, but through chance.³¹ By implication then, if deserved endings can come about by chance to characters regardless of their approach to morality, there is no reason why

³¹ With regard to those acting subjectively, the best example is that of Phoebus in his pursuit of *Daphne* (1.452-567), who fails purely on account of the chance factor of Daphne being of divine birth and her father being able to grant her prayers and thus escape Phoebus.

chance success cannot come about just the same. This is supported by the fact that chance success is shown as coming to characters of both other approaches to morality (see below).

While, in theory, there is nothing to say that completely emotion-based, subjective action could not come to such successes as the intrinsic, the fact that we do not see it in action is consistent with the explicitly positive presentation of the intrinsic approach to morality. Because the internal narrator presents this as superior, proper, a “should” – even if ineffective in reality – it is understandable that he would not present characters with a diametrically opposite approach to morality achieving obvious success. Even if the narrator is blind to the implicit weaknesses in the morality he promotes, the open narration of the opposite’s success would be out of character. While we do see some results of non-intrinsic characters occurring by chance (e.g. Pygmalion and Iphis), each of these can only do so because of an intrinsic element in their actions (in the case of Pygmalion and Iphis, this is reverence for the divine). Their successes do not reflect directly on or therefore suggest a positive evaluation of the non-intrinsic approaches to morality or the morals and values associated with them.

The mixed approach and the characters who hold it are similarly implicitly given a predominantly negative evaluation. Despite their beliefs and best efforts of reason and objectivity, the choices and actions of such characters are depicted as ultimately derived from their emotions and passions (e.g. Scylla, Toxeus and Plexippus, Pyramus, and Pygmalion). They consequently act in a manner both largely irrational and destructive, and in opposition to that which is intrinsic. Here again it is often a key element of their approach – the independent element – that means it is the emotion inherent in the choices and actions of the characters who hold it that brings them, and those around them, to misery, ruin, failure, and death. Thus we have another moral code presented as metaphysically ineffective, ultimately having no power to help characters deal successfully with reality, the world around them and the forces contained within it. Nor does it give them a proper chance of success or happiness in life, or a positive fate. The belief these characters have in their own efficacy is thus an illusion and, like the subjectivists, these characters’ morals and values almost universally entice negative outcomes of some kind upon both themselves and others.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that, as with the subjective characters, the actions, morals, and values of the characters who hold a mixed approach are not presented as *necessarily* doomed to failure. The potential for a happy ending is evidenced by the fact that several of them have positive endings which come about despite their irrationality (e.g.

Pygmalion, Iphis). However, each of these cases reinforces the inefficacy of this approach to morality through the fact that these happy endings are not purely consequential results of certain morals or actions, but largely the results of chance occurrence.

The role of chance bringing about these endings is emphasised by the depiction of certain characters of this approach having negative endings who, without the chance occurrence, are not presented as being likely to have had such fates as logical consequences of their (usually immoral or irrational) choices and actions (e.g. Scylla). As a whole, the implicit depiction is that immorality and irrationality, while usually leading logically to ruin, does not always do so. However, their happy endings do not reflect positively on the mixed approach to morality, since non-logical results can be success or failure in equal measure. In these cases, the morality or approach of these characters is not necessarily at fault or the cause for success in these cases. Rather, it is chance. Here the narrator, seemingly unwittingly and unconsciously, undercuts the explicit evaluation of this approach to morality by showing the inefficacy of morality to bring about such endings as he depicts characters as deserving. We will say more about this presently.

Given the significant difference between the explicit evaluations of the intrinsic and the above approaches and their respective morals and values, we might well have cause to expect this positive representation to be continued in the consequences of these characters' choices, actions, and their respective fates – to have the characters who follow a morality which is presented positively, to have positive endings brought about by their morality, just as those who followed a negatively portrayed morality come to predominantly negative ones. However, this is far from the case. Although an intrinsic approach is advocated strongly, this does not mean that characters who follow intrinsic morals and duties are any more able to deal with the universe or know how to go about life and achieve success, happiness, or a positive ending any more than those who follow non-intrinsic ones.

We have already seen that characters such as Phoebus and Althaea, who follow what they hold as intrinsic regardless of context or consequences, have endings just as painful as those with non-intrinsic approaches to morality. Indeed, their consistent following of their moral code is what logically brings about the ruin that follows, by putting them in morally contradictory situations with which their moral code cannot deal. Broadly speaking, contradictions such as this ultimately prevent characters who act according to an intrinsic morality from attaining and maintaining any kind of long-term success and happiness in life,

and are thus a necessary aid in their destruction. To quote Glenn (1986) once more: "...so piety [in Greek Mythic tradition] is not always unmistakably just or beneficent. As Althaea learned, there may be conflicting pieties with equally valid claims: her brothers require pious vengeance; but if Althaea takes it, she will commit the heinous impiety of causing her son's death. Inequity may appear in the results of piety." Piety is in fact in this sort of story "brought into question because it and impiety can bring the same results" (p.114).

What we actually see in this kind of story is that the negative outcomes stemming from and associated with this approach to morality imply its own metaphysical inefficacy, as was the case with both of the non-intrinsic moralities.

These negative endings are further understandable given what we earlier observed regarding an intrinsicist morality being shown as able to come from a variety of sources. If the source can vary, then it is possible that contradictions will occur between the morals and values stemming from each. If we add that the morality stemming from even one source can be contradictory – which is indeed the case – then contradictions become all the more likely.³²

This further fits with the metaphysical presentation of the gods discussed earlier. As we have already observed, the gods are often the source and arbiters of this intrinsicist morality and, because they are fallible, capricious, unpredictable, weak, and prone to petty jealousies – and at the mercy of forces beyond their control, such as love and the Fates – by implication, their commands and wishes are not necessarily just and moral.³³ Thus Feeney (1991) observes, "gods may have their own *iura* ('codes'), which humans cannot claim for themselves, [however] the poem does not calmly present this as an accepted fact – man is not presented as knowing/ accepting that their code is not the same as the gods'" (p.198).

³² This implicit evaluation of an intrinsicist morality is vastly different to that found in Vergil, and once again a comparison of the two is instructive. In the *Aeneid*, Vergil consistently promotes following the gods' decrees and one's intrinsic duties as a path to happiness (both in this life and the afterlife) because in his world, the gods are all-powerful and very nearly infallible (see n.18 above for a bibliography on the gods in Vergil). Specifically, the sequence of heroes in *Aen.* 6.636ff indicates that Vergil's hero, after letting go of all personal values, such as Dido and Creusa, in order to do his duty to his people, family, country – as the gods mandate – can implicitly look forward to a happy life or glorious afterlife as a consequence.

³³ As Segal (1969a) commented, Ovid "speaks in his prologue of some larger order: a *deus* and *melior natura* put an end to the primordial strife of the elements (1.21 ff.). But the gods who maintain this order, while occasionally defenders of a meaningful morality (e.g. 1.163 ff., 8.689 ff., 9.428 ff., 15.807 ff.) are also lustful, selfish, petty, and cruel, as bad as most mortals and worse than many" (pp.86-7). See also Galinsky (1975) pp.66-7 for the capricious nature of the gods and Ovid's lack of emphasis on the moral qualities of their actions.

We see this, for instance, in the fact that the gods, although demanding worship, are not always heedful or rewarding of characters' worshipful attitude towards them. Sometimes they are, but even then the gods' aid and reward for characters' piety is often a chance occurrence, and does not necessarily stem from a character's virtuous thoughts or actions (e.g. Pygmalion). Similarly, in a number of these cases, the gods' favour is only temporary, and the characters favoured later come to suffering, either because of the gods' caprice (e.g. Minos – whose prayers regarding Scylla are heeded, and yet he is later shown as a frail and fearful old man),³⁴ or their own faults.³⁵ There are also a number of exceptions, where pious prayer is utterly ignored, such as we saw in the character of Proserpina, and the seer Mopsus – one of the participants of the Calydonian boar-hunt. In sum, we see that while prayer to the gods has the potential (but is not certain) to help in the short term, this help is uncertain, often a chance occurrence and, when it does occur, fragile.³⁶

The chance aspect is emphasised through several characters being presented as having positive endings deserved by their virtues in following intrinsic morals and values – particularly on account of their good relationships with the gods – but whose fates are not purely consequential results of their piety or virtue. Here, correlation does not equal causation. Argument can be made in each of these cases that the endings are either A: not unbreached or enduringly positive; B: regardless of whether they are unbreached, the ending does not come about through their morality, morals, or values, but for other reasons; or C: if the positive ending does stem from their morality, this is itself depicted as a chance occurrence as far as those characters' actions are concerned. Since we have seen only minor examples of this in the preceding chapters, let us consider a further instance which more fully illustrates the point.

On the surface, the story of *Deucalion & Pyrrha* can be read from the outset as an example of justice and reward of piety, given that they do pray to the gods to restore their race (1.377-80). This is indeed what eventually happens, but it is evident that they are not in fact saved because of their especial piety. That is only recognised by Juppiter afterwards (1.318-29). Out

³⁴ This is perhaps most prominent in cases such as that of *Cadmus*, in which it is explicitly stated that the gods' favour is only temporary. *Minos'* case is in another way an example of the limitations of the gods' ability to reward piety, even if they choose to: Minos is one of the figures Juppiter uses as an example of the fact that even he too is circumscribed by the will of the Fates, and cannot make those immortal whom he so chooses (9.428-38).

³⁵ As has already been noted, we see this in the case of *Atalanta & Hippomenes*, who are initially favoured by Venus for their piety to her, but later punished by her for their impiety (see *Ceres* n.39 or further examples).

³⁶ See Glenn (1986), who discusses this in each story where it arises.

of all those who perished in Juppiter's flood, it is never depicted as anything other than chance that it was this couple that survived and happened to be suitable for Juppiter's purpose. Along similar lines Due (1974) argues with regard to their ability to create man being a reward for piety, that "there are these overtones suggesting... that humble and tender believers in the good are able to mollify rigidity and enliven numb coldness. But at the same time it appears from the context that Deucalion and Pyrrha are only tools: the recreation of man *origine mira* has already been promised by Juppiter. Their piety makes them qualified to become agents but does not make miracles itself" (p.111).³⁷

The same issues apply to how the *Metamorphoses*' various apotheoses fit into the poem's presentation and implicit evaluation of the intrinsicist approach. While the fates of these characters are more unequivocally positive than those of the examples given above, and these may similarly be *assumed* to be purely consequential results of piety, virtue, or following an intrinsicist code, in each case convincing arguments can be made for these being the result of other significant causal factors. Even in such a prominent case as that of Julius Caesar, the circumlocution that goes on in the form of Venus' conversation with Juppiter dispels all possibility that his actions or morality bring about his fate. It is moreover stated clearly that he is deified *because* of Augustus' future actions (see *Pygmalion* n.34).³⁸ The implication in all of these cases is that life is up to chance – it does not stem from one's actions or merits – and taken together, these examples compromise the idea that these happy endings can be

³⁷ The case of *Philemon & Baucis* is another notable example. While Otis (1970), p.345, states correctly that these characters have positive endings which are rewards for their true deserts (the implication being that this stems from their attitude towards the gods), I would add that the fact that the gods were there and in a mood to reward them is chance. After all, the gods' visit is an extremely unusual situation. They are not in the habit of visiting thousands of homes to root out the impious and the good and punish or reward them respectively. Philemon and Baucis' virtues do not bring *this* about, nor is it presented as likely that others of similar disposition would, given that they have no power over such factors. Additionally, we may add the observations of Newlands (2005), who suggests that this reward is not permanent, in that this story is followed by that of *Achelous*, which is "intended to demonstrate the ability of the gods to change the shape of humans (8.725-878). Yet since his story concerns how a wicked king, Erysichthon, cut down a sacred tree, it sheds ironic light on the outcome of the story of Philemon and Baucis. The gods' power of metamorphosis, it seems, is circumscribed, for it cannot guarantee perpetuity of form or indeed ultimately resist the various forces of change that dominate the world" (p.479). Finally, there is good reason to doubt that this story is meant to be taken literally – as a statement of fact that in the world of the *Metamorphoses* such events occurred where piety seemed to be rewarded and a happy ending ensued. See Glenn (1986), p.111, who covers this in detail. More broadly, Glenn uses this example to prompt us to remember that some stories are meant to be taken as falsely told. As we have touched upon in the stories of *Ceres*, *Pyramus & Thisbe*, and *Pygmalion*, internal narrators' stories are nearly always meant to emphasise a point – they have reasons for telling the tales they do and in the manner that they tell them – and must therefore be taken and analysed carefully.

³⁸ See Tissol (1997), p.188, and Due (1974), p.86, who make several good points about this – especially in relation to its significance in the matter of the supposedly pro/anti-Augustanism of the poem.

taken as evidence for the implicitly positive evaluation of an intrinsicist morality or its efficacy.

In summary, despite the explicitly positive treatment of the intrinsicist approach to morality, and depiction of the morals and values associated with it as right, proper, and to be followed dutifully, it is implicitly, in reality, shown to be ineffectual and likely to fail. The morals and values associated with it cannot be relied upon to help one deal with reality or achieve success or happiness in life in the long term. Certainly intrinsic virtue sometimes goes hand-in-hand with success, but also with destruction. The consistent following of intrinsic morals and values can not only put one in contradictory situations with which such a code cannot deal, but often invites – and even is essential to – the ruin of both the characters who hold it, and those around them.

This is clearly a similar implicit evaluation to those given to the negatively portrayed subjective and mixed approaches and their associated morals and values; the main difference being that when negative fates come about through key aspects of their respective approaches, these are explicitly presented as deserved.

Summary of implicit evaluations

Throughout the poem, what we see is that acting on morals and values associated with all three moral codes is implicitly depicted as being not only possible but likely to be ineffective in dealing with reality and bringing the characters who hold them to long-term success and happiness, or ultimately positive fates. Similarly, all three approaches are shown as likely to increase the chances of the characters who hold them – as well as those around them – to meet with misery, failure, death and destruction. The inefficacy of all three approaches is emphasised by the fact that in each case, results explicitly presented as deserved can and often come about through chance occurrence, as their opposites are shown to be in both the intrinsic and mixed cases (and implied to be possible in the case of the subjective). The fact that chance endings such as these are not exceptional, but chance is a frequent contributor to characters' fates, is shown by the frequency of these occurrences through the *Metamorphoses*. The fates of a number of characters are even emphasised as being the results

of chance. Prominent examples include, but are by no means limited to: Actaeon;³⁹ Dryope;⁴⁰ Cadmus;⁴¹ and Hippolytus.⁴² The same could be said of such minor characters as the unnamed innocent (albeit pious) bystander in the story of *Perseus*.⁴³ The sum result of the above depictions and evaluations is an implicit undercutting of morality as such and presentation of it as ultimately ineffectual.

Thus in a world in which characters use morality to guide their choices and actions, the kind of moral code they hold, the kinds of morals they therefore act upon, and the sort of values they pursue, are not relevant to their destinies, since these factors cannot be relied upon and do not necessarily mean that one is more or less likely to have a happy or successful life or a particular kind of fate. What happens does so regardless of, and often in spite of, a character's approach to morality and the code of values and morals they hold as a consequence.

This is perfectly consistent with the deterministic aspect of the poem's outlook above. Put simply, if one's emotions, values, choices or actions are determined by external forces outside one's understanding, choice, or control, the following of any moral code or value set is metaphysically impotent and cannot be a factor in determining a character's happiness, success, or fate. Thus, since morality is not a significant factor in determining characters' lives and fates, and since destruction visits characters of all approaches in equal measure, success and happiness are haphazard – it is really only through chance and the caprice of fate or the gods that they come about. As a corollary, because the individual character is not in charge, there is no point in judging him by the morality of his actions, since this are unlikely to have a bearing on his life or fate.

³⁹ The narrator states explicitly that the cause for *Actaeon's* misfortune is Fortune – not any crime of his own “but if you search well, you will find that the crime was one of Fortune, not wickedness; for what wickedness did wandering have?” “*at bene si quaeras, Fortunae crimen in illo,/ non scelus invenies; quod enim scelus error habebat?*” (3.141-2), and the action confirms this. See Anderson (1997) on this passage.

⁴⁰ Of no ascertainable approach to morality, whose only fault is to be ignorant of the fates, “*fatorum nescia*” (9.336).

⁴¹ See *Phaethon* n.60.

⁴² Who, innocent and unknowing is thrown to his death. That is of course if we assume that his story is to be taken as the truth as he himself tells it, for which the parallels between this tale and that of Euripides' more famous telling seem to provide evidence. See Fränkel (1956), pp.226-8.

⁴³ He, although a lover of justice and reverer of the gods, has just as gruesome a death as the wicked suitors (5.99ff).

Indifference to morality

The above does much to explain what has often been noted with regard to Ovid's attitude to morality and his treatment of the moral aspects of the *Metamorphoses*' stories: that he appears to view the topic with indifference – that he comes across as amoral (failing to genuinely promote or denounce any particular moral code or set of values) and sometimes gives the appearance of deliberately refusing to moralise.⁴⁴ For example, Galinsky (1975) observes "Ovid's non-moral treatment of myth, and ... his evasion of moral solutions or of extensive concern with profound, metaphysical problems" (p.13-14). Similarly, Solodow (1988), with respect to the *Met.* version of the story of Aeneas, which is so morally treated by Vergil, claims that Ovid "draws from it no code of behaviour which is endorsed. In short, he knows no morality, to use the term in a wide sense," and goes on to generalise that "the world of the poem... lacks sense and meaning, discrimination of better from worse, or any single standard of judgement, and which refuses to authorise, much less prescribe, any course of human conduct" (p.157).⁴⁵ As we have seen, these assertions are somewhat lacking if we read the narratorial voice as the voice of Ovid as he wanted to be taken (see below) – given that it does explicitly promote a particular moral code – although more well-founded to the extent that Ovid does not explicitly promote a morality through the actions portrayed in his stories. If morality is impotent, then there is no need to promote one over another.

Indifference to suffering

The idea that morality as such is worthwhile is further negated by, and explains the fact that, Ovid does not come across as having particular sympathy for even the virtuous or innocent characters who suffer.⁴⁶ He is often indifferent to their fates (most notable in the scenes of mass death, such as we have seen resulting from Phaethon's ride and Ceres' distress at the

⁴⁴ For a good statement of the issue, see: Holzberg (2002), pp.128-9, with regard to the issue of Minerva and Arachne; and Galinsky (1975), p.66, with regard to the issue of divine injustice.

⁴⁵ Other examples noted of Ovid's failure to elucidate a moral are noted by Galinsky (1975), pp.64-5 (for instance the story of Medea, in which what is focused on are its details, not the theme of the story – he deliberately is not interested in its morals), who goes so far as to state that "...one of the basic tendencies of the *Metamorphoses* [is] the evasion of moral concerns" (p.125). In a similar vein, Feeney (1991) summarises the problem of interpreting the poem in stating that "Ovid's poem is unique amongst ancient writings in the ruthlessness of its refusal to provide an environment which shapes the meaning of human experience" (p.204).

⁴⁶ A factor which is, according to Due (1974), deliberate (see p.157) – a view not shared by Otis (1966), who sees sympathy in Ovid's un-judgemental attitude towards moral actions, claiming that "his sympathy is inclusive rather than discriminatingly moral" (p.341).

loss of Proserpina).⁴⁷ Of the general theme, Wilkinson (1955), p.227, quotes Sellar (1892), p.347, as summarising that Ovid “has little power over the springs of pathos... A great sorrow, a great affection, a great cause or a great crisis, awakens in him little corresponding emotion.”⁴⁸ For the same reason, he does not triumph at the seemingly rightly deserved destruction of the wicked, impious, and immoral (e.g. Scylla). Indeed, the characters he creates can rarely be classified as wholly good or thoroughly bad (they nearly always have some good and bad qualities, although with a definite tendency one way or the other).⁴⁹ Similarly, if indeed this implicit presentation of indifference is conscious on Ovid’s part, then it accounts for the oft-noted technique found in the *Metamorphoses* of the interruption of particularly dramatic, tragic, and pathetic scenes, with incongruous details, comedic flourishes, and often unrelated and out of place digressions and interruptions.⁵⁰ Hence we have such digressions as the geographical catalogue inserted into the tale of the destruction caused by Phaethon’s ride and the burst pipe in *Pyramus & Thisbe*.⁵¹

The same idea is further implied by the use of humour to undercut the virtuous, heroic, morally admirable – those characters who pursue morals and values implied to be virtuous – as flawed and metaphysically impotent.⁵² We have already looked in detail at a number of

⁴⁷ Wheeler (2000), p.42, and Due (1974) both make a point of highlighting this with respect to Ovid’s account of the flood in Book 1 – a scene criticised by Seneca on account (in Due’s words) of the narrator’s attitude being “that of a fascinated spectator, not at all that of a victim. The reader is not supposed to be shocked but pleased” (p.110). See Sen. *Q. Nat.* 3.27.13-4.

⁴⁸ This is an issue which has caused much theorising by previous scholars, although none have, to my knowledge, explained it as a result of indifference to morality. For example, Galinsky (1975) suggests that such lack of sympathy, combined with the inclusion of comedy in tragic scenes, is merely a result of the fact that such things were not wanted by the Roman audience (p.68); and Wilkinson (1955), who, among many good observations on the subject, notes that even renaissance scholars criticised Ovid for being “heartless” in this respect (p.443).

⁴⁹ See *Meleager* n.42.

⁵⁰ See Albrecht (1999), pp.149-50, 174; Galinsky (1975), pp.34-5, 153; Holzberg (2002), p.15; and Solodow (1988), pp.32, 77-81, 118; Wilkinson (1955), p.235; Gildenhard and Zissos (1999), pp.164-5; and generally Tissol (1997), and Due (1974). For a contrary view, see Otis (1970), pp.331ff, who does not seem to think that the techniques Ovid uses to distract the reader or introduce incongruity into his tales detracts from good story telling.

⁵¹ These nevertheless serve an artistic purpose; the form or style of a work (as opposed to its content) can certainly be the main attraction for some, and I suspect (as does Tissol, 1997, p.90) that this was a major factor in Ovid’s choice to write what he did *in the way* that he did.

⁵² See particularly Galinsky (1975), pp.66, 110-53; Otis (1970), pp.346-51; and Tissol (1997), who seems to have a good idea of what Ovid is doing, noting (among other things) that “for Ovid, heroism of any kind is the least convincing of human pretensions” (p.197). See also Newlands (2005), pp.481-5. Far less convincingly, Otis (1970) claims, with regard to Ovid’s spoiling of tender scenes of love, that since it is “notoriously difficult to make a story out of such [conjugal – proper] love... [it] must in fact be broken and interrupted in order to retain any narrative significance” (p.270). Similarly, see Fränkel (1956), who claims that “There is no leering indelicacy or sarcastic brutality in Ovid’s humour; it evokes not roaring laughter, but the friendly smile of appreciative comprehension ... Ovid’s wit verges on the mordant ... only when wicked people receive their

prominent examples that illustrate this point. Take for instance the cases of: Tellus, Ceres, the Calydonian heroes, Pyramus and Thisbe, and Pygmalion, who are all presented explicitly (by narrators of varying degrees of reliability) as virtuous/good and to be sympathised with, but undercut by the humour of their presentations, their ridiculous actions, or the deliberate spoiling of pathos and sympathy in what happens to them – an aspect of the poem that has puzzled many commentators. Solodow (1988) put it with regard to one such episode “We are entitled to wonder what this episode means to the poet, what it is supposed to mean to his readers?” (p.119). As a broader principle, even the characters who do hold an intrinsic approach to morality, and who are explicitly stated to be virtuous or are seemingly rewarded for their virtue, are undercut through a variety of means. These include humorous depictions, subtle negative comments about them by the narrator, emphases of their faults and weaknesses, or focus of the reader’s attention away from the moral issue of the story (he distracts the audience and deliberately spoils the seriousness of the situations or representations by unnecessary digressions, deliberate grotesqueness, and incongruous aspects – often humorous).⁵³

The undercutting of morality in general is given further weight through the depiction of characters holding strong values (especially personal values) or indeed any values to an excessive degree – irrespective of which morality they are associated with – as markedly *increasing* their chances of having an unhappy or unsuccessful life in the long-run, or coming to a negative fate. We have seen this in all six stories examined in detail already, prominently in the characters of Phaethon, Cycnus, Proserpina, Scylla, Pyramus and Thisbe, Meleager, Althaea and Pygmalion.⁵⁴ In all of these cases, regardless of the kind of moral code a character follows, none of them would have exposed themselves to the suffering to their eventual suffering had not their values been so strong. In short, the results in reality show that strength or extent of values is likely to facilitate misery and failure. Thus the claim of Otis

deserved punishment” (p.215, n.42), a view with which I disagree. For broader discussions on Ovid’s use of humour in the poem, and on its use in undercutting those listed above, see the scholars listed in *Introduction* n.20. On the destructive power of humour in general its various forms, see Kierkegaard (1966).

⁵³ Generally on this subject, see Galinsky (1975), pp.11, 34, 153; Solodow (1988), pp.32-3, 77-81; Otis (1970), p.332; Holzberg (2002), p.15 (who quotes Quintilian’s negative views on this aspect of Ovid’s poetry – a view which is, incidentally shared by the younger Seneca. See *Q. Net.* 3.17.13-4); Due (1974), p.150; Wilkinson (1955), p.235; and Tissol (1997), p.11, who quotes John Dryden, in the Preface to *Fables, Ancient and Modern* (1700), as stating effectively (and I think convincingly) that Ovid’s tricks of form and use of language (among other things) make his work unserious because they undercut the serious found within it. See also Tissol pp.90-105, 124-40, who reaches the same conclusion that I do – that Ovid did this deliberately – although by different means.

⁵⁴ Note that Pygmalion is no exception – without the chance intervention of Venus, this would still have logically applied.

(1970), that the stories of “[*Cephalus & Procris, Pyramus & Thisbe, Orpheus & Eurydice, Ceyx & Alcyone*] are all tragedies – the lovers are catastrophically separated – but the endings in some sense validate the strength of mutual affection” (pp.323-4), is inaccurate.⁵⁵ This idea is most starkly concretised in cases like that of the Heliades and Cynus, who, out of excess, cry themselves out of human state – sometimes into virtual nothingness (or a pond) – on account of the extent to which they hold a value.

Indeed, excess of any kind, not just in adherence to a certain moral code or value set, is presented as likely to entice ruin. We see this in the depiction of any qualities a character has that are outside the norm. Where a characters’ qualities are of a greater degree than those of his fellows – or are commonly held as acceptable – these characters are presented as asking for trouble. For instance, those with abnormal beauty or skill are shown to logically incite conflict and destruction as a result – as in the cases of Arethusa and, perhaps more significantly, Atalanta.⁵⁶ Similarly, excessive confidence, self-esteem, estimation of or pride in one’s luck, position in life, or own abilities to think and act correctly, are also attributes easily reached in their extremes, and are shown as almost infallible beacons that draw both conflict and ruin near – from god and man. Consider the characters of Scylla and Meleager.⁵⁷ This is also particularly prominent in the examples of artists who challenge the gods. The case of the Pierides, who have too much self-confidence in their own abilities to the point that they are happy to challenge the Muses themselves, is just one example. Rosati (1999),

⁵⁵ We have already seen with Pyramus and Thisbe that it is the strength of their affections and the actions which result from these emotions that brings about their tragic separations. Moreover, although Pyramus and Thisbe are in a sense reunited as a result of these feelings, it is not in a way that counts – a living human form. The ending of the story of *Ceyx & Alcyone* is similar. Even in *Orpheus’* case, the lovers are only reunited in the underworld where the likelihood of post-mortem happiness comparable to that found in life is at least dubious. See n.20 for discussions on Ovid’s presentation of the afterlife in the *Metamorphoses*.

⁵⁶ For further examples, see *Ceres* n.57.

⁵⁷ Newlands (2005) observes the larger trend of “... artists who challenge the gods are cruelly punished for their audacity” and gives the stories of Minyeides, Marsyas, and Arachne as further examples. He goes on to mention as similar the characters of Daedalus, who “challenges nature itself by building wings for himself and his son, wings that tragically fail because he has not taken into account human fallibility... [and Orpheus who] ignores the power of the Bacchantes to his peril” (p.484). Similarly, Theodorakopoulos (1999), discussing the character of Marsyas, observes that he is punished for “creative arrogance (of the sort that a number of characters in the poem display, all with catastrophic consequences)” (p.156), and that in such cases “divine punishment is inflicted for artistic hubris” (p.157). As Albrecht (1999) put it, “the artist’s glory and misery are inexorably tied to and flow from the same source; as the poet himself said, when speaking of his own destiny: ‘It was through my own talent that I perished’ *ingenio perii Naso poeta meo* (*Trist.* 3. 74) ... the artist symbolises the man who, thanks to technology, attains an almost superhuman greatness and, at the same time, runs headlong to his destruction” (pp.163-4). This trend can be expanded to include all of the characters who consciously challenge superior powers; they can all be said to be examples of thinking too much of oneself, or being improperly confident in one’s abilities in thought or action. Destruction and death are their usual rewards.

speaking on the conflict between gods and mortals, sums up the situation succinctly: “the mortals refuse to recognise the superiority of the gods, leading inevitably to divine punishment of hubris” (p.240). As Albrecht (1999) notes, in discussion of Arachne and Niobe, such characters are targeted because they are “too perfect” in their respective ways (artist and mother), and “too sure” of their perfection – i.e. for their pride (p.163).

As a whole, in a world where gods are greater than man and have a pointed interest in keeping him small – preventing and punishing him for thinking too well, loving too well, being too confident or showing hubris – and who are also at the mercy of their emotions and prone to feelings such as jealousy, it is easy to see why such characters’ ruin is almost inevitable when a god crosses their path. Moreover, those who seem to be particularly metaphysically efficacious in any particular aspect of life (e.g. being skilled or effective in artistry, strength and skill in combat) or being noticeably confident in one’s own abilities or value (in one’s own eyes or those of others) are shown to hasten their own doom, even without the gods. They either invite jealousy and hostility, or their excessive talents are tied to (or lead to) a hubristic attitude. They are selfish, arrogant, impious, over-confident, and consequently likely to desire to step outside the normal bounds expected of them.⁵⁸

Difference between Narrator and Ovid

Finally, in the above we can see evidence for the differentiation between the poem’s overall internal narrating voice and that of Ovid. The internal narrator explicitly promotes, advocates, and positively presents those characters who approach morality as intrinsic, and does the same for their respective morals and values. However, the stories he tells, and the results of them, implicitly depict this morality as flawed and even harmful if followed strongly and consistently. Thus the internal narrating voice is in a sense just like that of Orpheus when dealing with the story of Pygmalion – ignorant of the logical implications and implicit meaning of what he tells and how he tells it.⁵⁹ What the narrator says can only be taken as Ovid’s view if it is endorsed by the actions and fates of characters depicted in the text.

⁵⁸ Thus Ovid comes across not only as ambivalent to morality and philosophy (as Due, 1974, pp.162-3, suggests) but as believing that these concepts themselves can be harmful if held as important.

⁵⁹ Thus while Ovid may (perhaps) intend the narrating voice to be taken as his own, the truth or falsehood of such a statement cannot be demonstrated by such an analysis as this; for discussions on the narrating voice

Why Ovid made the narrator's explicit presentation of the intrinsic approach to morality incomplete and initially misleading, cannot be answered from this study alone, but from what we have above, it seems likely that this was a primarily artistic choice. Given that Ovid lived and wrote at a time where certain values largely the same as those presented here as intrinsic (see *Phaethon* n.66) were promoted, it is understandable that he chose, at least explicitly, to have his narrating voice come across in a manner sympathetic to these morals and values. However, the presence of so many stories in which characters following an intrinsicist code are brought to contradictory situations, and the manner in which these situations are highlighted, strongly suggests that Ovid not only realised that he was implicitly undercutting his narrator, but that such undercutting of all three views of morality in being able to help deal with reality is deliberate on Ovid's part.⁶⁰ It is of course possible that Ovid considered it hardly likely that the undercutting of morality itself as impotent would be received well at the peak of the highly moral Augustan age.⁶¹ Also a possible factor in dissuading him from doing this is that he had no alternative to offer.⁶² Indeed, what Ovid does in this field is usually

and its potential relationship to that of Ovid, see the conclusion of Otis (1966); Mack (1988), pp.115-7, who seems to take the narrating voice as representative of how Ovid himself wanted to come across; Holzberg (2002), p.116; Barchiesi (1999), p.112, who follows Mack in taking the narrator as the image of Ovid projected by the story; and Solodow (1988), pp.37-73, who gives an excellent discussion on the various techniques found within the poem which seemingly deliberately draw attention from the action to the narrator and manner of its narration, and thus on Ovid as being in charge of the narrating voice.

⁶⁰ Such a view is not original. For example, Tissol (1997), speaking of the contradictory situation in which Althaea is placed, notes that: "As in all Ovidian paradoxes, this one assaults the normal well-protected mental categories of the reader" (p.15). In a similar vein, discussing how in the story of *Anius' Children* in Book 13, piety ultimately does not help, and duty is overthrown by fear, he claims that "Ovid introduces that familiar Vergilian theme, *pietas*, to show its utter defeat in this context" (p.184). That is, a certain approach to morality is shown as clearly as it is only to emphasise its inefficacy. That the impotence of morality is something of which Ovid was aware is further suggested by the fact that he does make a clear distinction between approaches to morality – on the one side the positively presented intrinsically based morality, on the other, the negatively presented subjective and mixed – even going so far as to take the trouble to have his narrator flag each as such, although still presenting each approach as equally ineffectual. Solodow (1988), points to the story of *Erysichthon* as an instance of Ovid's narrator using strong moral language, yet withholding from emphasising the moral aspects of the tale (pp.160-1). This is a good example of the emphasising of a certain morality as good, but never promoting it in action/ efficacy, only ever in word.

⁶¹ See Döpp (1992), pp.129-30, and Otis (1970), p.126. Nevertheless, see Due (1974), pp.159-62, for an argument that such a divergence from normal, Augustan, moralising would be one of the poem's attractions. See also p.88. Similarly, I am not convinced by the claim made by Galinsky (1999) that "Another hallmark of Augustan culture that is caught up in the *Metamorphoses* is the inclusivity of all major previous traditions and models... the typically Augustan tendency to draw on, meld, and combine all previous traditions and to creatively make them into a new whole... this attempt, which is so central to the *Metamorphoses*, to outdo all predecessors in the sheer range of styles, genres, and traditions, is one of the chief characteristics of Augustan art and architecture" (p.107). See Due (1974) with regard to Ovid's own account (*Tr.* 4.10.35ff) of his attitude in life to standard Roman duties (p.55).

⁶² A view supported – I think rightly – by Due (1974) who, discussing the supposed "anti-Augustanism" of Ovid's poem, states that "The anti-Augustan and anti-epic features are important but additional elements in the *Metamorphoses*. What made Ovid suspect in the eyes of the government is not really that he was against, but that he was not for" (pp.68-9). Similarly Galinsky (1975), speaking of Ovid's presentation of deities,

through negatives,⁶³ as we have seen with the implicit depiction of each approach and their likely negative results.

Malevolence

This negative note is appropriate to conclude discussion of our first aim: the identification of the ideas that must necessarily be inherent in the text to make it as it is and which, when united, constitute its implied philosophical outlook. These have now been identified, discussed, and related to one another, and used to explain and understand a number of aspects of the *Metamorphoses* which appear at first to be problematic to the interpreter. We have also seen that what is presented is consistent and forms a unified whole.

However, taken as a whole, this gives rise to the second aim stated at the outset of this thesis: the identification of the sense-of-life implied by and which expresses the philosophical outlook inherent in the *Metamorphoses*' stories. This is, I think, the sentiment behind questions such as that of Segal (1969a – already quoted in *Introduction* above), “what sort of “Weltanschauung” is implied in [the *Metamorphoses*] polarity of urbanity and violence?” (p.1), and that posed by Due (1974) – with specific regard to all the paradoxes and contradictions that appear in the work – “What common denominator could be extracted from all this? What point of view could be found from which all this makes sense together?” (p.121).

Several commentators have come close to answering these questions, although not by any means in full. For instance, Newlands (2005) sums up the poem as an “exploration of human identity and the powerful forces that can influence, alter, and even destroy it” (p.477), and Tissol (1997), claims that Ovid is inviting us to “see behind the outward face of nature an origin in human suffering and passion” (p.193).⁶⁴ Note that I have quoted here views which

concludes that what is implied is not “an active criticism of the Augustan religion... [but] his personal indifference” (p.173).

⁶³ Tissol (1997), noting this, states that “if there is a didactic purpose to the *Metamorphoses*, it is not so much in the inculcation of positive moral values as in the exposure of the audience to revealing – through sometimes unpleasant – experiences” (p.124).

⁶⁴ See further pp.208-9, in which Tissol explains, with regard to Ovid’s deliberate selection and modification of existing stories (as opposed to merely ransacking other authors’ works for examples of metamorphosis): “superficially, one could maintain that Ovid simply ransacked the *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, and *Aeneid* – and legends connected to their plots – for metamorphoses, adding also much extraneous material of an un-epic nature. But

focus on the negative, as this is in many ways represented by what we have found in our discussions above, and captures much of the tone of the poem.

As observed in the *Introduction*, it is an oft noted fact that the majority of the *Metamorphoses*' stories end tragically, and this has been noted in the above analyses. However, we have also observed that the work as a whole expresses an even more thoroughly negative view of life than that presented by tragic endings alone. This is why I describe the sense-of-life expressed implicitly throughout the *Metamorphoses* as a profoundly malevolent one. By this I mean that the view of the universe presented is not of one open to understanding, success, or happiness, but rather one which, by its very nature, is hostile to such things. Consequently hardship, pain, suffering, misery, accidents and failure, are to be expected as the norm, and the individuals' attempts to achieve the contrary are in fact likely to *increase* these negatives. This can be shown to stem directly from the information we have discussed above with regard to the philosophical view of metaphysics, epistemology and ethics inherent in the poem.

For example, particularly relevant in the realm of metaphysics is the idea of determinism being always active in some form (either internal or external) and working against the individual's struggles to successfully deal with the universe around them. Glenn (1986), speaking on this element of the *Metamorphoses* asserts that "Ovid... seems to put his finger on some sport of horror hidden in the human psyche. Perhaps it is the realisation that built into us is our destruction, that one's strength or major drive is his undoing, or that what one attacks outside himself is at the same time something within himself, or that because the personality contains poles, it is wretchedly divided and can be reversed" (p.30).

Also, the world is one in which gods (who are not only able to change the laws of nature as perceivable by man, but directly influence his emotions and his reason) exist who have an interest in commanding and being revered by mortals, and punishing them when they fail in these aspects. They also have a capricious nature, and a keen interest in keeping mortals small; often punishing him for stepping outside his normal bounds in thought or action (thinking too well, acting too well, or aiming too high), or merely having qualities which are excessive; not only excesses in value and passion, but skill, thought, and talent. That such

the aetiological character of these metamorphoses, whether epic in origin or not, shows a consistent purpose in the selection: to replace whatever was their original thematic character with the inevitably grimmer and more disquieting perspectives of the *Metamorphoses*."

powers' actions are unreliable and unintelligible, take away man's capacity to direct his life, and make negative fates more likely. This is emphasised by the fact that the gods are, just as mortals, susceptible to their emotions, and at the mercy of the unintelligible powers of both love and the Fates. In combination, these external forces in effect work together with the individual's internal dichotomy to prevent him, from achievement, success, or happiness.⁶⁵

As a whole, metaphysically, the idea that one's fate is inexplicable and ultimately determined by forces outside one's control – whether internal (one's emotions, lack of ability to reason) or external (such as the gods, Fate, or one's birth or background) – and the fact that one's attempts to be anything other than resigned, stoic, mediocre, particularly virtuous or effective in thought or action, are all likely to be harmful, necessarily implies a negative sense-of-life and a view of the universe as thoroughly malevolent.

Likewise, we see the expression of an unmistakably malevolent view of the universe in the realm of epistemology and ethics. This is implied by the presentation of all three approaches to morality as likely to be ineffectual in helping characters successfully deal with reality, or achieve long-term success and happiness, or a positive fate. This is consistent with the fact that Ovid even appears to take pains to show that consistent pursuit of each moral code can often entice and even be crucial to destruction.

This is illustrated by the distinction made by the narrating voice between virtuous and vicious actions. These are shown to be unreliable as logical progenitors of a good or bad fate respectively. Moreover, one's virtues (and indeed, strong values or outstanding character traits of any kind) can be logical and even necessary factors in one's destruction. The fact that chance is a frequent factor in bringing about the fates (whether positive or negative) that are depicted as deserved (or indeed their opposites), further undercuts the idea of morality itself as a significant force in determining one's life. In sum, the type of moral code by which one lives – the code which tells one what is good and bad, virtuous and vicious, moral and immoral – is shown to be inconsequential in one's struggle for success, happiness, or a positive fate. What happens is in fact haphazard, and one's morality – or lack thereof – is in this regard irrelevant. Life in general does not have a moral outcome.

Taken as a whole, this view of the universe means that the life of the individual, and particularly of man, is ultimately out of his hands, and he is to expect misery, suffering and

⁶⁵ On this, see the excellent discussions by Tissol (1997), pp.191ff.

failure. No matter what his values, or whether his actions are virtuous or vicious, tragedy is to be expected except through chance intervention of the gods or the caprice of other powers. The individual is presented as a being who is in reality, to borrow the words of A.E. Houseman, “alone and afraid in a world [he] never made”⁶⁶ – or at least should be, if he is aware of the workings of the universe around him. Hence the sense-of-life expressed is malevolent, and agrees with the implications found through the poem that nothing is truly as good, just, perfect, or admirable as it seems or one hopes. The individual character is doomed to a tragic outcome to which happiness is the exception and, like suffering, is dealt out haphazardly by the nature of things. Accordingly, happiness, when it does come, usually does so through chance and, even then, it is almost never unmixed with negatives such as pain, sorrow, and loss, or at least the shadows of these looming imminently in the future.

As a corollary to this depiction of the work’s sense-of-life, the question could be posed as to what do the existence of these stories as they are show about Ovid’s interests? To this, I think Wilkinson (1957), gets nearest the truth when he quotes Ovid as saying that “a poem, like a face, was the more attractive for having a mole somewhere” (p.238 – found in Sen. *Contr.* 2.2.12). In effect, the idea is that flawed things (because they are flawed) are more worthy of interest than those that are not. From what we have seen of the poem’s content and the manner in which it is presented, Ovid does seem to have been interested in the flaws, the weaknesses, the imperfections, and the malevolence of the universe, in respect to both its metaphysical makeup, and consequently the failure and inability of any form of morality to deal with it. The fact that he offers no solution suggests that he himself had none. However, one could do worse than to propose an implication; that the best way to decrease the chances of one’s thoughts, choices, and actions, bringing destruction closer, is to remain impassive, indifferent, stoic, not to follow one’s emotions, or hold values of any kind too strongly – whether they be for something tangible, or purely moral (conceptual) – and to submit to the will of the Fates, the gods, one’s superiors and adversity of all kinds with equanimity.⁶⁷

By this I do not mean that moderation and restraint are likely to lead one to the achievement of one’s values or a happy ending, only that these measures are less inclined to incite more negativity upon one than is already likely to be dealt out by the surrounding universe. Put another way, one should not strive for or expect too much, but to be prepared for the worst to

⁶⁶ *Last Poems*, Poem 12.

⁶⁷ As, for example, does *Polyxena* (13.453-80), a character who, as far as I can tell, is neither criticized, undercut, or treated with humour in any way.

happen, since success and happiness are dealt out haphazardly by the gods and Fates, and are not reflective of one's approach to morality, or any particular morals and values associated with it. If this reading is correct, it appears to be supported by several stories given in the text of which this is very nearly the main theme. *Daedalus & Icarus* (8.183-235) is an ideal example to advocate the "be moderate" position. It is a concretisation of the idea that excess in anything is bad, whether that be skill, passion or one's goals. In another tale (10.86-142), Cyparissus accidentally kills his beloved stag and resolves on death himself. Phoebus tries to comfort him and admonished him to grieve "*lightly* and in proportion to the event" "*leviter pro materiaque doleret,/ admonuit!*" (10.133-4). Here, moderation is advocated, but *not* as a way to avert suffering – in both cases, suffering is already inherent in the circumstances and events which have occurred – but merely as a way to lessen the chances of it being increased.

Broader application

The preceding observations mark the end of this study, although the results achieved and the methods used to get there are by no means exhausted in their use. The above interpretation of the text, although focused on a handful of stories, provides the groundwork upon which further investigation into the *Metamorphoses*' stories can be built, and allows for the understanding of how each of its individual stories is consistent with and integrated into the poem as a whole in an implicit philosophical sense. Moreover, the methods used can be applied to and help understand not only the oddities, juxtapositions, and seemingly contradictory aspects of the poem noted above, but any significant element in the text which appears to contain a major inconsistency or incongruity in its presentation.

For example, from what has been accomplished in this thesis, we may suggest a path to interpret the explicit (or seemingly explicit) political and philosophical statements given in the text, such as the overt and covert references to Augustan politics, and the philosophical mishmash contained within the early parts of Book 1 (dealing primarily with stories of creation and early mythic history), and that of *Pythagoras* in Book 15. By looking at the ideas that are explicitly promoted, and whether they are in accord with those that are implicit – whether they are proven in action in the reality of the poem, and whether or not they are undercut, treated as impotent or false or, cut down (undoubtedly deliberately) by humour which contradicts the narrator's explicit stance – their various aspects can be assessed to be

(or not to be) consistent with the implicit philosophical outlook of the poem.⁶⁸ These are merely examples, and it would take as many pages as already used to cover even these issues in full. So for the moment we must leave this as an avenue which has been opened up by both the methodology and, more importantly, the results of the above study.

The value of these results is by no means limited to the text of the *Metamorphoses*, but can be applied to Ovid's other works if – and I believe this to be the case – we can take the fundamentals of the outlook presented above to be reflective of Ovid's own personal outlook. Due (1974) duly warns us that “We should not... rashly identify what appears from the poems to be the mind of the poet and what was actually the mind of the man. Poets are prone to put on magic garbs, making themselves either invisible or unrecognisable” (p.43). Nevertheless, I am inclined to suppose that he is referring to that which appears to be explicit in the text – what comes across on the surface – rather than implied fundamentals that have been the subject of this study. If this is the case – and I admit openly that this is not the place to give a detailed defence of such here – we may suppose, as has Due, that the ideas found to be implicit are likely to be present in other works of the same author: “however different the individual poems may be, they always remain expressions of the same mind” (p.43).

With this in mind, I would suggest that other key problems in Ovidian scholarship could be addressed productively in this way. To briefly take a single example: the puzzle of why Ovid as a love poet comes across as different to his near contemporaries in the same area (such as Tibullus, Propertius and Catullus), in that in his love poetry (i.e. the *Amores* and *Ars Amatoria*) his *amator* seems to have at least the potential to be successful in elegiac pursuits, and is less affected when he meets with failure. The implied philosophical ideas of the *Metamorphoses* (particularly those to do with the destructive nature of love, values, and morality), would suggest that one reason why Ovid's elegiac lover can have success, is that he does not treat love, romance, passion, in a truly serious light as do Ovid's contemporaries.⁶⁹ As Wilkinson (1955) puts it: “It is all represented as a great game, played

⁶⁸ Although there is an enormity of scholarship on both of these issues, with particular respect to the difference between the explicit and the implicit (as I have defined them above) with regard to Augustus, see Due (1974), pp.87-8, and Holzberg (2002), pp.149-50. With regard to the same for Pythagoras, see Holzberg (2002), pp.145-6; Segal (1969b), pp.281-2; Fränkel (1956), p.110; and Mack (1988), pp.142-3. More generally, see Myers (1994); Wheeler (2000), pp.114-27; and Solodow (1988), pp.162ff.

⁶⁹ The power of Venus (love) is treated throughout the poem as a capricious, unintelligible, and, in many ways predominantly negative force, linked with emotion, and ultimately tragedy. Thus Otis (1966), although calling the *Metamorphoses* an “epic of love” (p.334), states earlier that “Love, in short, is the anti-heroic force of these epics: it is negative only” (p.333). Compare also Otis's (1970) definition of *amor* in the *Heroides*, which

seriously at times, but regarded by the player between-wiles with amused and indulgent astonishment” (p.47), and so success or failure can be treated with more equanimity than would otherwise be expected. Likewise the emotions that are associated with these successes or failures, although ecstatic and painful, soon dissipate, since what occurs does not really matter in the long run.⁷⁰ Thus the implication would be that if love is treated lightly, even flippantly, and one does not take it too seriously, success in love is to an extent possible, although perhaps less profound and meaningful than that sought by the elegiac lovers of Ovid’s contemporaries. While such an idea is clearly discordant with the claim once made by Otis (1966), that the *Metamorphoses* shows that its author had a particularly “high valuation of love” (p.341), it is consistent with that which we have found to be inherent in the poem itself, by the treatment of its stories, and the characters, actions, and outcomes portrayed within them.

would, I believe, be entirely applicable to the *Metamorphoses*: “an external, impersonal force (a kind of disease) that prostrates its victims: separation from or abandonment by the lover is itself a consequence of the love – such recklessness, such sacrifice of all else to one emotion, was made for catastrophe” (p.265).

⁷⁰ Such a reading would be consistent with observations such as those also summed up by Wilkinson (1955), with regard to Ovid’s early elegies: “Ovid is no more passionate, romantic or sentimental than Chaucer. However much he may affect to be the victim of the erotic situations he depicts, we feel, and are surely meant to feel, that he is really, like the Horace of the *Odes*, a detached observer of the tragic-comedy of sex, a witty connoisseur ... As such he came before the world in his first poems, the *Amores*, which are more often intended to entertain us by their art and wit than to move us as a record of personal experience” (p.26). See pp.17-82 for a more in-depth summary of Ovid’s differences to his contemporaries and near predecessors in this field.

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